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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DIFFICULTIES IN COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING

BY

SHARON FITZSIMMONS ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring, 1995

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry is a vehicle through which themes and situations connected with communication and understanding are uncovered within the context of both the teaching a research situation.

As a teacher/researcher, I studied my own experiences as I attempted to teach and to achieve better communication and understanding with my own students and their parents. Analysing my narrative account of my three-month experience as a teacher/researcher, I uncovered difficulties and problems which disabled me in my attempts to improve communication and understanding, and which eventually had a disabling effect on my ability to teach.

To analyse my narrative account of my experiences as a teacher/researcher, I undertook a process of interpretive inquiry, drawing from the principles of hermeneutics. As I proceeded with my plan, there were findings which I expected, but many others which were surprises and which could, in hermeneutic terms, be called uncoverings. These uncoverings redirected my study as I began to focus on why, under some circumstances, it may be difficult or even impossible for a teacher to attain the deep levels of communication and understanding which are often required for effective development and implementation of some curriculum models.

Redirected by new questions and concerns, my process of inquiry pulsed back and forth from the events which unfolded in my classroom to situations in our educational systems and in our society as I sought to interpret the meaning of events in light of theory, research, and my own previous experiences and understandings.

Re-appearing themes included difficulties resulting from: having to live and work within differing perspectives of time; having to cope with restrictions in material resources; having to justify or defend to parents an array of unrealistic or conflicting expectations imposed by many different people to whom I was accountable; and dealing with fear and lack of trust. I studied these themes in relation to each other

and in relation to situations in the world beyond my classroom. Through my analysis, I noticed how these difficulties can be hidden from the wider educational community by a teacher's sense of guilt, and how such a situation can lead to a loss of spirit and a focus away from the children.

As a piece of research, this inquiry becomes part of the community conversation about schools, teaching and teachers. In the discussion section, there is a brief history of the conception of teacher as researcher and a description of how the teacher as researcher movement remains problematic in ways which make it difficult for teacher/researchers to be involved in educational discourse. Some of these problems include: differing conceptions of research; differing theoretical frameworks; questions of ownership and content; and problems in documentation and analysis.

Difficulties involved in curriculum development and conversations about curriculum development are also discussed, showing how these difficulties can be seen as both the cause and the result of problems in communication and understanding. After briefly describing varying definitions of curriculum, the role of the teacher in curriculum development, models of curriculum development, and various curriculum orientations, I show how my experiences and the analysis of my experiences changed my preconceptions about what a teacher as curriculum developer might be expected to do.

This dissertation illuminates the complexities in the inter-relationships among some of the problems and difficulties which I encountered as a teacher/researcher, and brings forward for discussion how these complexities are related to the ways our educational systems are constructed and influenced by situations in our larger society.

Dedication

This thesis is dediated to all the children I have taught, and to my own children in particular. Threads for the children were startlingly absent from my metaphorical weaving, but their spirit reappears during my interpretive journey. The spirit of the children should be at the heart of everything we do in our educational community. It is therefore fitting that a chapter about the spirit is in the center of this dissertation. The poems by the unnamed child were written by my daughter, who, along with my son, are aiso at the center of my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my advisory committee, my husband, my children, and all those who were beside me on my very long and interesting interpretive journey:

Doing this interpretive inquiry has had a transformative effect on me, because it enabled me to *live* so many of the difficulties in communication and understanding which I discuss in my thesis. You have lived these difficulties with me, and I appreciate your steadfast support and encouragement.

Communication and understanding can not occur easily. This can be frustrating in a world where people have been accustomed to having information simplified and handed to them in a predictable package so that it can be dealt with quickly and painlessly, without the need for any change in thinking or attitudes. My interpretive journey demanded much of me, my colleagues, and my family, and this thesis demands much of its readers. Life is not simple; and if communicating about it becomes too simple, perhaps not much is understood at all.

I think this dissertation has much to contribute. Most important is its potential for helping to provide new pathways for other educational research and new insights and questions for further exploration. Although research should never be easy, it may be less problematic for some other educational researchers to now use the process which we have undertaken together on this long, complicated, and difficult journey.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this preface is to guide the reader's approach to this dissertation. Using a metaphor of a weaving, I will be showing you how the threads that I identified in a reconstruction of my experience as a teacher/researcher are linked to other threads which appear in this situation, in other situations, in my life, in your life, and in the lives of others in our educational community and in our society. It is in exploring these links or connections that we can hope to open conversations that may enable us to think differently about some of our difficulties in communication and understanding.

Although I draw from personal experience as teacher/researcher in my interpretive journey, this dissertation is not about me or about my particular experience. It is not a case study. Rather, it is about the ideas, thoughts, questions, insights or inspirations which we in the educational community can create among us as we recognise the ways in which our varied and particular situations are part of the whole which we experience together. It is about the difficulties we face in attempting to bring about new forms of engagement and dialogue about the world we face together in our mutual interest in the education of children (Smith, 1991).

The task of this dissertation, like the task of Hermes, the Greek messenger god upon whom hermeneutics was named, is the task of passage. My mission is to find ways to open conversations in such a way that they can be entered, so that understandings or meanings may be made of the threads or themes which are woven through my study. But this task is fraught with many difficulties, difficulties which seem inherent in the process of communication itself. This dissertation identifies some of these difficulties and shows how they are linked with problems outside of my particular experience, in the larger educational community and in our society. It is these links which become the focus of attention and a catalyst for further questioning, deeper discussion, and new

opportunities to develop mutual understandings.

I use interpretive inquiry as a means to break through oversimplified or statistical or technicist frames (Greene, 1994) in order to pursue understandings which go beyond what can be accomplished with the scientific mind (Gadamer, 1952/89), recognising that communication and understanding are ultimately creative acts, not technical functions (Schleirmacher, 1819/1978). The hope is that through our conversations, we will make meanings together, we will get our prejudices to speak to one another, and we will begin to see what is questionable.

Although my interpretive inquiry is drawn from one experience instead of a variety of examples, I am not treating it as typical or generalizable to similar types of situations. Rather, like Dorothy Smith (1987), I am using an approach which problematizes the everyday world, explicating the conditions outside my classroom in our educational systems and in our society which produce and reinforce the conditions within it.

Drawing from my narrative account as a teacher/researcher, I identify some difficulties and combinations of difficulties which I experienced during my three-month period as a teacher/researcher. Things happened which I never would have believed would have happened to me. Eventually, I felt that I could no longer teach, and I resigned. The difficulties which I experienced led to important questions which changed the direction of my study. Rather than studying how a teacher might communicate with students and parents, as I originally planned to do, I began to look at why it may be impossible to do so - why, after three months of teaching, an experienced teacher could feel not only unable to communicate, she could feel unable to teach. As I proceeded with my analysis, I realized that although the themes or threads were drawn from my own experience, they are not peculiar to that particular experience. Because the conditions in the everyday world of my classroom are linked with conditions in the larger world, the things which happened to me could have happened to anyone. They could have happened to

you.

In this dissertation, I show how the themes or threads which appeared in my analysis can be linked to much of human experience both within the field of education and outside of it. For example, fear, lack of trust, and guilt are factors which, at times, change the color and shape of all of our lives; and even though few of us would claim to understand the exact nature of the soul, many of us have felt what it is like to have our souls battered or broken by circumstances out of our control.

The description of my interpretive journey will lead some readers to find connections with their own lives and with the lives of others. For example, Jevne and Zingle's (1992) book about disabled Alberta teachers and the Alberta Teachers' Association (1993) document, Trying to Teach, both provide us with echoes of the frustrations, anger, and fear which were apparent threads in my weaving, battering or obliterating the spirit at times.

A few excerpts from conversations with disabled teachers interviewed in Jevne and Zingle's (1992) study show how some other teachers' frustrations can be linked with mine.

> Teachers are being asked to do more and more and yet . . . they are evaluated constantly. Anxiety is built to a very dangerous level . . . (p. 20)

> Teaching has become an increasingly stressful occupation, especially in the past 20 years . . . society, rapidly changing (and much of it in a negative way) has difficulty knowing what it wants -- yet teachers are to deliver! (p. 128)

> The expectations of the teachers right now are increasing to the level where it's going to become detrimental. If we continue to increase our expectations and keep demanding more and more of the teachers, instead of having a positive effect we're going to have a negative effect . . . we're looking at losing

> teachers and perhaps losing good teachers, because of some of the increased demands that are being placed on them . . . (p. 128)
>
> Pressures and requirements of this career are changing and increasing. It is certainly much more demanding in personal and professional terms than it was fifteen years ago when I started classroom teaching. (p. 129)
>
> Something is happening to the teachers . . . There's too many that are unhappy. (p. 18)

The teachers represented in the above quotations had already removed themselves from the classroom. But other voices such as those represented in the Alberta Teachers' Association (1993) document, Trying to Teach, are cries from teachers still maintaining their teaching positions. Cohn and Kottkamp's (1993) book, Teachers: The Missing Voice in Education, also provides us with many pleas from teachers who seek to "remind us of the trials of teaching in an age when standards, accountability, and the back-to-basics movement paralyse teachers and thrust them into constant balancing acts between and among interpersonal and pedagogical decisions" (Parker, 1994, p. 245).

You, the reader, may also find connections to situations in your own life and in the lives of friends whose experiences have not or can not be documented in educational literature. This dissertation attempts to show that there can be value not only in focussing on someone's related experience or story but in studying her/his deliberative exploration of the meaning or significance of the experience. As Parker (1994) suggests, what is important to coming to better understandings within the educational community is not only listening to voices which beg to be heard, but interpreting what people involved in education may have to say. He writes: "Let us not forget to talk together in efforts to challenge and expand our understandings . . . And let us not forget

that voice is an instrument of agency" (p. 253).

The purpose of my dissertation is not for you, the reader, to gain a better understanding of *my* particular experience from *my* point of view, but for us, together, to create meanings from the uncoverings and questions which are illuminated through my analysis. Although some readers may want to hear more about my particular story, I have not included the narrative account of my experience in this dissertation because it was not appropriate for me to do so, and because the purpose of this dissertation is not to persuade the reader about a particular telling of my story. Instead, its object is to draw attention to and explore the themes I became cognizant of when studying my story.

In hermeneutic inquiry, meanings are created as links are made from the particular situation to the larger conditions of which they are a part, as the interplay between the part and whole is seen. Meanings are also created as something in my experience resonates with something in your experience or in the experiences of others. When this resonance is felt and there is a nodding of heads and the thought that "I, too, have felt that way", then the passage of entry will be opened, communication can proceed, and new conversations can begin.

Interpretive inquiry does not seek to form conclusions, but it does seek to further our concerns often by raising or focusing fruitful questions or reframed problems (Rorty, 1982). It also seeks, not closure, but to keep the conversation open and alive (Packer & Addison, 1989). This dissertation links itself with the stories from other teachers' difficult situations and raises questions about what have become common-sense forms of thinking, practice and policy which can result in these difficult and sometimes impossible teaching situations. Hermeneutics recognises that meaning must be made as both the writer and the reader attempt to access each other's understandings within the frame of their common language and experience, generating "new ways of seeing and thinking . . . bringing about new forms of engagement and

dialogue about the world we face together" (Smith, 1991, p. 202). It is further questions, further uncoverings, a fruitfulness or generative promise which we are seeking, and the hope for these lie in the various meetings of minds between the teacher/researcher and the many different kinds of readers (administrators, policy-makers, parents, and other university teachers and researchers) to whom this research can speak.

OVERVIEW

I have organized my dissertation in three parts. At the beginning of the first part, I explain why I wanted to look at what it may be like for a teacher to try to achieve better communication and understandings with her students and their parents. I describe how I saw shared caring as a natural bond among parents, teachers, and others concerned with the education of children, and I tell about my belief in the power of communication at the grassroots level. I then describe my initial plans for my study, how new questions evolved as I proceeded, and how these new questions or uncoverings redirected my exploration. This process is characteristic of interpretive inquiry following hermeneutic principles. Interpretive inquiry, beginning with a question, a practical concern or caring, often proceeds with the researcher taking some action to get closer to what he/she hopes to understand. This often leads to findings, some of which the researcher might have expected, and some which are surprises and which can, in hermeneutic terms, be called uncoverings. At this point, the uncoverings can change the direction of the study because of the new questions or concerns prompted by the surprises (Packer & Addison, 1989). As Gadamer (1952/89) tells us, happenstance is actually at the centerpiece of interpretive work.

In a brief description of my study, I explain how, redirected by new questions and concerns, I moved into the forward or projective arc of the hermeneutic circle, using existing preconceptions, preunderstandings or prejudices to interpret data which consisted of a narrative account of my field experience. This interpretation took the form of reflections which I wrote for each of the daily entries in my narrative account. My next reconstruction of the experience, which is provided in the next section, takes the form of a metaphorical account, a weaving or tapestry representing the three months. Within this metaphor I describe how I re-examined the data and interpretation, likening my narrative account to a weaving with themes or threads

which I studied in relation to each other and in relation to conditions in the larger world outside my classroom. During this process, I used one of the key ideas in interpretative inquiry following hermeneutic traditions, the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation (Smith, 1991).

The second part of my dissertation consists of my analysis of my data, my final reconstruction of the experience. It begins with a description of my weaving and an explanation of the threads or themes which I found. I devote one chapter to each of these threads, showing its relationships to other threads and illuminating its connections with conditions in our educational system and in our society. During this process, new insights, ideas, and questions are uncovered, and I look at these from several other perspectives, bringing to my study material from educational research and literature. In a chapter entitled "conclusions" I then identify some ideas for helpful action, illuminate new questions or concerns, and show how my own preunderstandings have changed. I include a methodology chapter at the end of my analysis section to further explain the principles of interpretive inquiry and the hermeneutic tradition which guided my interpretive journey.

In the third section of my dissertation, I show how my inquiry becomes part of the community conversation about schools, teaching, and teachers, speaking to the bodies of literature or current conversations about teacher as researcher and teacher as curriculum developer.

I have chosen this particular format for my dissertation because I believe it to be most appropriate for my inquiry purposes. As Eisner (1991) suggests, experimental formats can make it more possible for some people's medium and message to be more compatible.

INTRODUCTION

Before I began this study in the fall of 1993, I had believed that it would be possible for a teacher to achieve a comfortable and effective working relationship with her students and their parents. I had believed that, working with parents in an atmosphere of trust and caring, teachers could come to understandings which could enable them to approach curriculum development with a sensitivity to the socio-cultural background of each child. As I proceeded with my study, my initial beliefs were severely tested. The most improbable set of conditions led to what were perhaps predictable and yet devastating consequences.

This section presents an overview of some of the beliefs and understandings which led to my research interest.

Shared Caring as a Natural Bond

Prior to my most recent teaching experience, I had seen shared caring as a link among people who are responsible for the well-being of children. During my many years as a parent and as a teacher, a sense of caring had created a natural bond with others who shared my concerns.

As a parent, I remembered sitting over morning cups of coffee with other mothers, talking about our children. I remembered joining other mothers on park benches, with the warm sun on our backs, watching our children play. The love and care for children seemed to be a bond between mothers who were friends, acquaintances, or even strangers. We all knew that however else our lives might be different, we all had the same kinds of feelings about our own children; we felt hurt when our children were hurt, joy when they were happy, and utter desolation if they

were wrenched away from us.

When I began teaching in an inner city school (and saw how - by my standards - some children were being neglected), I questioned, at first, whether these parents loved and cared for their children as I did mine. But as the years went by, I had many encounters with parents which showed me that their love and care - though sometimes misdirected or hampered by troubled lives - was no less fervent than mine. A native woman, hunched over a small desk in my classroom, wept as she handed me a wrinkled letter written in crude but careful print, expressing the things which she could not say; how much she loved her child and how deeply she feared for his future. A refugee father implored me to look after his son. "He is my whole world," he said. "He is all I have." An immigrant couple from Eastern Europe told how they had left a comfortable life and many belongings behind, so their children could have hope. " We sacrificed everything for them . . ." A single mother, bone tired from shift work, told of her desperate struggle to support herself and her child, to find reliable babysitters, to ensure that there was enough food to last the month, insisting at the same time, that she would never give him up.

Nel Noddings, in Caring (1984), told how she came in one day, to see her daughter, exhausted from a soccer game, fast asleep on the couch, a damp lock of hair falling against her forehead, and how she felt such a fullness of heart - the same kind of fullness I remember one day, when I could not take my eyes off my baby fast asleep in her crib, with her pink cheeks and soft, steady rise and fall of breath - or when I watched my two children, laughing, running pell mell down a grassy hill, sunlight shining through their fine, flyaway hair.

As a parent, it is my love for my children which makes me want to do my best for them. As a teacher, it is also my affection for my students which motivates my efforts. The rewards for my hard work are the eagerness of the children, their bright eyes and smiles and often hugs - their excitement in discovering something new, their

laughter in sharing something funny. Talking with colleagues, it is clear that this is what motivates them too. Most of my colleagues work very hard, and I saw that what drives them to work so hard is not career aspirations, but their personal desire to do what is best for the children.

"What do you think has made you a successful teacher?" I asked one friend who had agreed to be the subject of a research paper.

"Caring," she said, without hesitation. "I really care about these little ones. I love teaching them. I love what I do."

I believed that most parents and teachers shared these feelings. Since it seemed to me that both parents and teachers care about the children they share, I began to think about how we might work together more effectively.

The Power of Communication at the Grassroots Level

I had become interested in conversation and story-telling as a means of better communicating with one another at a grassroots level. I had been influenced by people like Lorri Neilsen, who taught a course called "The Academy of the Kitchen Table"; Nel Noddings, who talked and wrote about building relationships and caring as a means to understanding; Jean Clandinin, who has brought new understandings to life in the classroom by encouraging teachers to tell their own stories; and Julia Ellis, who began each class in a spring session course with informal storytelling which resulted in deep and surprising insights. Engaging in these kinds of conversations with friends, acquaintances, and strangers - creating an atmosphere of warmth, building trust, and then allowing the conversation to flow in a relaxed and natural way so that stories could emerge - I found that when the conversations revolved around education, I heard stories which provided me with insights into the way other parents and other teachers understand the education process - insights which, I believed, could inform

curriculum decision making at the classroom level.

Like Neilsen (1992), I believed that:

> in the world at large and in education in particular, we need to get back to the kitchen table to value the personal and the political inquiry that goes on there . . . . the kitchen table is, ultimately, where life comes home every day. Regardless of the size or the nature of the family unit, the location or appearance of what is called 'home', in fact whether or not we have a roof over our heads, we humans have a need to find a place and space where - metaphorically or literally - we light a fire, share a form of nourishment, be it a cup of reconstituted tea or a grand meal, and tell stories of our day in the world. The kitchen table is where we take comfort, where we take stock, where we plan, where we can shed tears, vent our anger, tell secrets, crack jokes, share our learning; where our souls and our spirits are renewed and replenished and where we learn how to carry on. It is not always a happy place, nor a safe one - sometimes it is a very troubling place at which the reflections of ourselves or our worlds we inhabit are unsettling, unwelcome, and frightening. But the kitchen table, for all its many moods and manifestations, is a touchstone among individuals - strangers and loved ones - a place of possibilities and of renewal . . . (Neilsen, 1992, p. 1)

Excited by possibilities for further insights at the grassroots level, I decided to look more closely at a classroom teacher's efforts to achieve communication and understanding among herself, her students and their parents.

The next section will provide a brief description of my study.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MY STUDY

This section will briefly describe my initial plans for my study, and how new questions evolved as I proceeded.

I wanted to look at what it may be like for a teacher to try to achieve better communication and understandings with her students and their parents, and how these understandings may affect her curriculum decision-making. In the hope of enhancing communication and deepening understandings, I wanted to build trusting relationships; I wanted to "fuse horizons" with the people with whom I worked, and then I wanted to analyse this process so that difficulties, opportunities and learnings might be uncovered and discussed with others in the education community.

I believed it would be worthwhile to study my own efforts and process of bringing the hopes, fears, loves, beliefs, values, understandings, past experiences, aspirations and motivations of a teacher, students, and parents onto the table for honest discussion. Toward this end, I decided to take a teaching position (a position as teacher/researcher, as I called it) for the 1993-94 school term. I obtained permission to record my observations and reflections in what I called a "personal journal", and also, where consent was given, to record and document conversations with parents regarding the education of their children.

My intention initially had been to work as a teacher/researcher for the entire school term. I thought that, after a few months in the classroom, I might conduct tape-recorded informal interviews or conversations with the parents of my students, which I could analyse as part of my research process. As I began to carry out my plan, a number of dynamics unfolded to disrupt my efforts not only to communicate with others, but also to teach. I became ill and resigned from my teaching position after three months. I did not attempt to return to conduct the interviews because I was no

longer the teacher of the parents' children. During my three-month teaching experience, my questions and concerns as a teacher/researcher had been redirected by the events and experiences in the classroom and school. These events and concerns were recorded in my journal.

My journal contained an entry for every teaching day. Reconstructing the journal in a pheonomenological style, I added reflections to each entry which served to tie the narrative together and illuminate important themes or insights which were emerging. I later realised that this account of observations and reflections no longer fitted the definition most people use for a "personal journal", so I called it, instead, my "narrative account". It is this narrative account that I have used as a vehicle for uncovering new questions and possibilities.

To analyse my narrative account, I undertook a process of interpretive inquiry, drawing from the principles of hermeneutics. Packer and Addison (1989) explain how interpretive inquiry begins with a practical concern: a question, a breakdown in understanding, confusion, a caring. It proceeds with the researcher taking some action to get closer to what he/she hopes to understand by working toward a fusion of horizons. This is the sort of action I undertook as I worked with my students and their parents, attempting to create conditions in which we could access each other's interpretive frames, sharing our hopes, fears, loves, beliefs, values, understandings, past experiences, aspirations and motivations. As I proceeded with my plan, there were some findings which I expected, but many others which were surprises and which could, in hermeneneutic terms, be called uncoverings. It was these uncoverings which redirected my study; I have come to realize that what I needed to study was not how a teacher, students, and parents may fuse horizons but why, under some circumstances, it may be difficult or even impossible for them to do so.

Redirected by new questions and deeper concerns as I analysed my narrative account, my process of inquiry pulsed back and forth from the events which unfolded in

my classroom to situations in our educational systems and in our society, as I sought to interpret the meaning of events in light of theory, research, and my own previous experiences and my understandings of the experiences of others. I have drawn not only from educational literature but also from popular literature and material distributed by the media, because these too, can contribute to interpetive perspectives.

Seeing my narrative account as a weaving, I looked at the relationships between the dimensions and themes which appeared and re-appeared throughout my narrative account, seeing how they were related to situations in the larger world outside my classroom. Some threads are heavy, some light, some fine, some thick, some so tightly entwined with others that they are at first invisible. Sometimes, when one is unravelled, another is revealed. When entwined with each other, the threads often look different than if they are seen alone. Therefore, each thread must be considered, not on its own, but in relation to others.

The following section contains the analysis of my narrative account. Each chapter is devoted to a different thread; however, the threads are discussed in relation to each other. The concluding chapter serves to tie the threads together and to look at them again in relation to the question of communication and understanding among teachers, students, parents and others concerned with the education of children.

A subsequent chapter provides a fuller discussion about interpretive inquiry as a research process and further details about my own interpretive journey. A discussion section then serves to explore the analysis of my research experience in relation to work in curriculum theory and inquiry.

ANALYSIS

The Weaving

My narrative account of my three-month experience as a teacher/researcher can be likened to a weaving, with many threads woven closely together. It forms a picture of my life as a classroom teacher over a period of three months.

On one edge, we can see how one thread appeared at the beginning. It was light and bright - representing a happy and energetic spirit, a sense of cheerfulness, enthusiasm, and optimism, as I stood at the brink of a new adventure: a new teaching job, and an opportunity to do research in the context of my own classroom. Happy memories and past successes had made me confident in my ability to teach and inspire children and to develop relationships with them and their parents. Graduate work had left me excited about new ideas to implement in my classroom.

I saw teaching as a pleasant, often joyful, activity. There was a general feeling of optimism and a sense of confidence. There was a willingness, often an eagerness, to work to accomplish my goals as a teacher and as a researcher.

Now that my own children are grown, I can devote myself heart and soul to teaching.

I need to develop activities which will not only enable the children to get to know and appreciate each other, but also help me to become acquainted with them.

I want to hear from the parents. I believe it is important for parents to understand exactly what their children are doing, and for teachers to know about their students' lives outside of school..

There was a sense of mission, a belief that a teacher can have a powerful influence on the lives of children and on the way a society develops.

With my graduate degree, people ask me why I choose to be in the classroom. "But this is where the power lies!" I reply. "This is where you can really influence the people who are going to form tomorrow's society."

I was confident that this would be a successful year for both teaching and for my research. I expected this job to be an easy one, compared with other teaching positions I had had; the class size was small and there were apparently no severely disabled or disadvantaged children. I was familiar with the age group, and had a thorough knowledge of provincial and school board curriculum objectives and expectations for these grade levels. Through classroom experience and studies, I had become familiar with many ways to facilitate childrens' learning. I saw my new teaching position as a good opportunity to not only provide excellent learning experiences for my students, but also to gain insights into the process of developing deeper understandings among myself, my students, and their parents.

Over the following three months, a myriad of circumstances and events created an interweaving of new threads which resulted in a dramatic change. The picture became much darker.

I can not believe what has happened to me. I find myself in an atmosphere of fearfulness and distrust. I begin to shake when someone enters the room; I am close to tears all the time. I am exhausted, but I can not sleep at night. There is a danger that my fatigue will make me less able to cope with the demands at this school.

I find that I can no longer teach the way I wish.

I never even began to develop the trust and mutual respect essential to have sincere conversations with the parents; there were too many barriers in the way.

Woven through my narrative account of these three months are stories of the conditions, events, problems and frustrations which led to this dramatic change. Also woven through the account are stories of persistent efforts to meet each challenge. But by the end of the three months, the once bright and happy spirit is almost obliterated by the tangle of threads which have darkened the picture. The atmosphere essential for strengthening communication and deepening understanding has never developed.

The following sections will explore the tangle of threads which contributed to darkening the picture.

The Threads

Time

One of the most dominant threads or difficulties had to do with time. The problem of time (not having enough time) became an obstacle to communication, not only with students and parents, but also with colleagues. Worse still, lack of time seemed to interfere with everything connected with teaching.

For me, difficulties with time appeared as a surprise. After many years of teaching experience, I had seen myself as a good "time manager", as a person who was "efficient" in undertaking classroom duties. Because of my background and my desirable situation (my own children were now grown up and my classroom assignment seemed "easy" compared with others I had experienced), I had been confident that I could not only manage my classroom duties, but could also undertake the additional duties required by my research plan. To my astonishment, I found myself in a situation where I "never had enough time".

The emphasis on time appeared in the first entry, where the greeting was extended:

"Good, you're here. We have to start the meeting immediately."

There is a sense of urgency, of having to hurry.

I hurried into the staffroom.

"Just give me a little time please. I'll have it done by tomorrow."

"We have to do it right now!"

The sense of urgency was connected with a sense of having too little time to get things done, of trying to stretch time.

I worked late.

I went to school very early.

I went back on the weekend.

I worked far into the evening - not only trying to make long range plans, but also preparing math activities for the next day.

Even at the last minute, I was making plans.

It is planning all these programs that is taking up so much of my time.

There is the sense, too, that no matter how much time is stretched, everything that must be done can not be done.

I need to get on top of my math program.

It was already October, and I still did not have an appropriate program in place!

"I've never worked so hard at teaching anywhere in my life, and I still feel behind!"

"I have errands to do, materials to buy!"

I was kicking myself for getting so behind.

"It's too late to do anything about that now."

I could not manage to get it done.

Constantly trying to cope with urgent needs left little time for rest and relaxation.

Since I had not taught primary grades for eight years, I had forgotten that you never have time to sit down.

I felt as though all my stamina was now drained.

I was exhausted.

"We're all tired," she said.

Pressed to exhaustion with immediate demands, there was no time or energy for left for sharing of ideas and thoughtful reflection and renewal of spirit.

The problem is, when to find time to talk with the other teachers? Both Deborah and

Bobbi are busy all the time. No one has time to sit around and chat.

It isn't so much a matter of finding the time, it's a matter of figuring out how to manage.

Countless hours have been spent on things which should never have been initiated in the first place.

It seems that there just isn't time at this school to be a whole person with a life outside of school.

The problem of time was accentuated because of its connection with other difficulties.

I was churning with mixed emotions - anger and frustration with the day's events, and shame that I had still not managed to decide how to develop all my programs and find time to prepare my own materials.

I remember my frustration in never seeming to have enough time to get things done. I never felt that I was able to do my best, and this made me reluctant to have parents and others watching me. I was embarrassed about the results of make-shift materials and hurried lessons. I was ashamed, too, when I believed the children's "needs" were not being met. I could not enjoy teaching when I felt ashamed and embarrassed about my work. Because time had not been a problem during my past teaching experiences, I wondered if I was having a problem with "adjusting," or if my problems were connected with aging, or if I was somehow having difficulty coping with "change". The remainder of this section will explore some of these questions in light of some other perspectives about time.

> Time the leech, time the destroyer, time the bloody tyrant..modern man has persistently regarded time as an enemy. Time has been portrayed in a thousand forms . . . time the devious slayer, a traitorous provider who gives only to take away. . . In the twentieth century the lament against the eroding power of time not only endures, but frequently appears to have increased in intensity. (Wood, 1982, p. I)

In education today, as in all of modern life, there is an increasing difficulty in coping with the restrictions of time.

"Teachers experience time as a major constraint on what they are able and expected to achieve in their schools" (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 1).

The difficulty in meeting expectations within time frames has resulted in a great interest in "time management" and "efficiency". In the past decade, ERIC lists 1363 articles which are concerned with time management in education, and 2807 articles are concerned with efficiency. Most of these articles are based on a view of time as irreversible, vectorial and divisible into segments of equal size and equivalent value - the time of our watches and calendars - the view which forms an integral part of the scientific image of the world which developed in the course of the last centuries. This linear, irreversible, and divisible conception of time, with its emphasis on "time management" and "efficiency", is characteristic of the culture of our modern western world. To understand how this conception affects life in the classroom and in our larger society, contrasts may be made with the way peoples of other cultures have understood time.

An Overview of Different Conceptions of Time

In an interesting essay in the Unesco Book Cultures and Time, A.J. Gurevich (1976) writes how representations of time reflect the rhythms and cadences of society and culture. In the consciousness of people of primitive societies, time appears not in linear fashion from past to future; but rather as a cyclical or immobile force, governing everything, the life of man and the existence of gods alike. Time, in this conception, is not an abstract duration; it is the very life of man, the link between human generations, recurring like the seasons.

Many of the peoples who created the great civilisations of antiquity had a cyclical consciousness of time. The systems of values underlying the ancient cultures are based on the idea of "an eternal present indissolubly linked to the past" (Gurevich, 1976, p. 233). Both the past and the future existed in the present; the old was looked for in the new.

Unlike the conceptions of time of the ancient cultures, the idea of time stretched out in a line is a construction of the European region. Gurevich attributes the notion of linear time to the influence of Christianity as the pagans' cyclical vision of the world was gradually replaced with an eschatological process taken from the Old Testament - the fervent waiting for the great event in which history is fulfilled, the coming of the Messiah. As time on earth was separated from eternity, time began to be perceived as an irreversible historical continuum.

Gurevich suggests that a change in time structure is one sign indicating that a ruling class is losing control. During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Church had the power over time. The clergy fixed the entire system applied to the calculation of time. The chronology of historical time was counted from the creation of the world and the birth of Christ. The astronomical year was also the liturgical year, punctuated by religious festivals; and even the day was regulated by the Church with its offices and

prayers. People were informed of the passage of time by church bells summoning them to matins, mass, vespers. Time for the individual was not their own time; it belonged to a higher, dominating force: the Church.

With the industrial revolution and the rise of the town, the power shifted and so did the time structure. There was a need for making more precise and standardized measurements of bodies and surfaces, space and time. Merchants had to travel quickly between trading centers. Entrepreneurs wanted to produce as much as possible in a short time. Work, measured by time, became an important factor of production. Time became linked with production. Industry became the new master, wresting control from nature, from antiquity and myth, and from the Church. With its control over time, industry imposed its own rhythm on human beings, forcing them to act more quickly.

The invention of the mechanical clock was both a logical outcome and a contributor to man's changing conceptions of time. With the invention of the clock and mechanisation of time, the difference between past and future became very precise, and the present time was compressed until it was merely a point. The present time became fleeting, irreversible, and elusive. Having discovered how to measure time in increasingly small and precise segments, human beings now had to cope with the restrictions of smaller and smaller measures of time. In trying to master time, human beings had become its slave - or the slave of whoever wielded power.

The awareness that I, too, had become a slave to time led me to begin looking at how philosophers have sought to understand the way conceptions of time can affect our lives. Fraser (1975) writes about the intellectual quest for an understanding of time. He presents representative ideas of time in Western Thought: its Aegean beginnings, Plato and Aristotle, Christianity, Islam, the Late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Kant and Critical Philosophy, Hegel and the Dialectics of History, and finally, what he calls the "fragmentation of philosophy". He also writes about ancient Oriental concepts of

time: time in China's past, India and the eternal present, and Japan and the unity of opposites. He goes on to describe the empirical search for mastering time and predicting futures; and the idea of psychiological time and the influence of memory and recall, language, change and personal identity. The awareness of different ways of understanding time enabled me to realize that my own problems with time were connected with the culture of the modern world.

Hall (1982) in The Dance of Life, also distinguishes among different kinds of time. He writes about biological time, personal or psychological time, physical or scientific time, and metaphysical time. He describes some modern, only recently identified constructs: micro time (which is culture specific and includes such patterns as "monochronic" and "polychronic") and "sync" time (the idea of "being in sync" with a culture or "moving with the beat". These ideas provide the ground for some of the work Hargreaves (1989) has done regarding the influence of conceptions of time on teachers' work, and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Wood (1982) has written about a twentieth century revolt against modern humanity's constructs of time, naming four protagonists: the Russian religious eschatolgist Nicolas Berdyaev (1874-1948), the British poet T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), the British novelist Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), and the Swiss psychologist C.G. Jung (1875-1961). Their works draw attention to the effects of conceptions of time (psychological, qualitative, or subjective time) on human experience, and to the effects of what has been regarded as "scientific time" (Wood, p. 3). Wood also cites Martin Heidegger's antagonism for the deception and regimentation of quotidian time (*Innerzeitigkeit*), relating how, in Being and Time, Heidegger argues that a person whose own time has been restricted to the mechanical time of an industrial civilization loses his humanity and becomes a mass man or *Massenmensch* (Wood, p. 17).

Time and the Structuration of Teachers' Work

In a paper on teachers' work and the politics of time and space, presented to the American Educational Research Association in 1989, Andy Hargreaves discusses how time has become a major element in the "structuration" of teachers' work. He explains how time structures the work of teaching and is in turn structured through it. "Time is more than a minor organizational contingency, inhibiting or facilitating management's attempts to bring about change. Its definition and imposition form part of the very core of teachers' work and of the policies and perceptions of those who administer such work" (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 1). Hargreaves goes on to identify and analyse five different interrelated dimensions of time, and to discuss how they apply to teachers' work.

Technical-rational Time

The first dimension which Hargreaves identifies is what he calls "technical-rational time". Within this dimension, time is a finite resource or means which can be increased, decreased, managed, manipulated, organized or reorganised in order to accommodate selected educational purposes. This dimension of time is dominant in programs where there is a clear separation between means and ends. Once ends have been chosen for philosophical, moral, or political reasons, the most efficient means of reaching them can be identified instrumentally and scientifically, and then implemented managerially. In such a view, time is an instrumental, organizational condition which can be managerially manipulated in order to foster the implementation of whatever ends have been chosen. This is the kind of time which Walter Werner (1988) identified as "objective time". This dimension of time is important in efficient management or "productive" use of time, and it is also useful in implementing selected educational changes (Fullan, 1982).

Micropolitical Time

Micropolitical time has to do with time distribution within an educational system - the idea of higher-status subjects receiving more time allocations, and the practice of higher-status people being "relieved" more often of time in the classroom.

Phenomenological Time

Phenomenological time is a subjective dimension to time, a person's own perception of time, grounded in the working situation. Within this dimension are the monochronic and polychronic conceptions of time which Hall (1983) identified.

In the monochronic time-frame, the person is concentrating on doing one thing at a time in a linear progression. A schedule is followed, and work is completed within that schedule. Monochronic time is dominant in the world of business and professions.

In the polychronic time-frame, a person does several things at once, in combination. There is a heightened sensitivity to context and to the implications and complications of surroundings. Relationships predominate. Hargreaves views the elementary school teacher's world as "profoundly polychronic in character . . . It is a complex, densely packed world where the sophisticated skills of the teacher must be directed to dealing with many things at the same time . . . it is also a world deeply grounded in intense, sustained and subtly shifting interpersonal relationships among children and between children and their teacher" (p. 15).

Physical Time

Physical time is the human construction or convention around which most human beings in the modern Western world organize their lives. Hargreaves mentions it because experiments in the physical sciences have actually shown that physical time is relative. Hargreaves believes this is important because "if physical time is truly

relative, then defenders of "objective, "monochronic" or "technical-rational" time cannot appeal to the natural laws of the physical world as justification for the worth and superiority of their own particular time experience (Hargreaves, p. 19).

Sociopolitical Time

Sociopolitical time has to do with the way particular forms of time come to be administratively dominant and the imposition of constructs of time as an expression of power (Gurevich, 1976). Hargreaves asserts that monochronic time-frames prevail administratively in education not because they are more effective or efficient, but because they are the "prerogative of the powerful" (p. 19). He writes that most often, administrators view the educational process monochronically, not polychronically; therefore, administrators have unrealistic expectations about the changes they are initiating and supporting. The result is an "intensification" of the teacher's work: a bureaucratically driven escalation of pressures, expectations and controls concerning what teachers should do (Apple, 1986).

Conceptions of Time in my Own Teaching Experiences

Looking at my own experiences as a teacher over the past twenty-five years, I see how the view of time in educational institutions has changed. In my early years of teaching, clearly the technical-rational dimension of time was dominant. The days, weeks, and months were carefully structured according to schedules determined at the administrative level. The institution was operated within a monochronic time perspective. Micropolitical time was also evident; teachers were required to submit time schedules based on predetermined requirements for each subject, with academic subjects (such as reading and mathematics) receiving more official time allocations than lower status subjects (such as music and art). Elementary teachers' work was

seen as classroom work; therefore they were provided with no time outside of the classroom for planning, preparing, or evaluating - tasks which were presumably done by people in "higher status" positions.

During the 1980s, people in the higher echelons of the educational institutions across North America began to focus on the need for change. The public (fraught with fear and distrust) were demanding change or "reform" to match the rapid changes they were perceiving through the media which were now technically capable of reporting on change the moment it happened. Within the educational community there had been much frustration that scientific research about education had not already resulted in substantial change in the classroom; therefore, the process of change itself needed to be managed more effectively (Fullan, 1982).

During this period of time, I recall how my superiors (consultants, assistant superintendents, and principals) often sought to create change in the classroom. Change took the form of the implementation of new methodologies and new programs such as cooperative learning, teacher effectiveness, peer coaching, whole language, and many others. Both the provincial government and the regional school systems were also mandating numerous changes - changes in curriculum as well as changes in policy. Change was seen to be good/exciting/desirable and any teachers resisting change were viewed as laggards. For administrators, being viewed as a person who had faciliated change could be a positive step up the career ladder.

During the 1980s, I was teaching at an inner city school where the principal supported and encouraged only those changes which were viewed positively by his staff. As a result, I worked for seven years in an atmosphere which I found to be happy and peaceful. We implemented many new methodolgies which did bring about dramatic changes in that school; in fact, that school gradually developed a reputation for providing an excellent learning and living environment for children. However, since the teachers had felt in control of the pace of change, time had not been a frustration.

This experience was quite different from the experiences described by some of my friends who taught in other schools - schools where change was enforced so rapidly that teachers were burdened with having to cope with too many changes in too little time. For those teachers, coping with so many changes often created a hectic atmosphere. I heard many teachers complaining about having to "do more and more in less and less time."

Administrators frequently perceived this problem as a need for teachers to better manage time. The problem of time was linked with teacher competence. In my own school district, I noticed an increase of programs or inservices in time management. Teachers who complained of "lack of time" were likely to be encouraged to attend one of these inservices - another demand on their time! In the meantime, in the peaceful atmosphere of my own school, I seemed to be managing my time well. I believed this was because I was "efficient" with my time.

Since time was seen as "a finite resource or means which can be increased, decreased, managed, manipulated, organized or reorganised in order to accommodate selected educational purposes" (Hargreaves, p. 3), suggestions were made to provide small amounts of time to facilitate change (Fullan, 1982). In my school system, educational budgets were healthy, and administrators began to apply the idea of "providing" teachers with additional time for school-based curriculum development. My school had an "early leaving" day which was intended to provide time for collaborative planning among teachers. Since my principal had chosen not to impose too many changes at once, our staff felt that the "early leaving day" was able to meet at least some of our needs. However, my friends in other schools reported that their "additional" time often created additional demands, as it became an opportunity for administrators to introduce still more new programs or changes which had to be fitted into classroom life.

During my most recent teaching experience, there was a tremendous

frustration with time, unlike any that I had experienced in all of my thirteen previous teaching years. There never seemed to be enough time to do everything that needed to be done. All the teachers in the school worked long hours, and everyone was constantly busy. Analysing my narrative account in light of Hargreave's ideas about time in relation to teachers' work, I see how the manipulation of time for the purpose of change, over the previous decade, had contributed to this harried and hectic atmosphere. Administrators had been living in an atmosphere of change for ten years. Using a technical-rational dimension of time, they had tried a number of ways to manage a large number of directives for change. But these management strategies (e.g. the provision of extra time for planning and money for inservices) had been dependent on a healthy budget; with cutbacks in budgets, these strategies were no longer possible. Nevertheless, the momentum of change had already begun, and the public had strong expectations that change or reform was still important. Since there was no money left to create change, there was no time left either. This resulted in a perception that educational reform had already taken place; and new methodologies were already expected to have replaced the old. There was, indeed, "no time left" to adapt to educational changes which had been initiated in the past decade. There was a belief that the parents wanted the best of instruction *now.* For me, as the teacher, it "wasn't so much a matter of finding the time, it was a matter of figuring out how to manage *right now."* There was "no time left" for planning, collaboration, or even thinking.

Intertwined with the problem of immediacy, was the problem of "colonisation" which Hargreaves (p. 25) defines as the infiltration of administrative concerns into what had traditionally been the teacher's private space. With "colonisation", the traditional "back regions" of the school (the staffroom, the hallways) - "the regions which can foster informal relations that build trust, solidarity and fellow-feeling among teachers, providing an interpersonal platform on which decision making and school life can be built" (p. 25) - are usurped by an administrator who increasingly

uses this space for his/her purposes. In losing power over this space, teachers lose the last remains of freedom over their time.

Along with the control of time, came new demands on time. These demands, causing the "intensification of teacher's work," had resulted from new expectations that arose from the decade of change. Some demands resulted from new attitudes of the public, parents, and administrators who were now insisting on "accountability" or "justification". Other demands resulted from tasks connected with program or material development - tasks which had been previously handled by other professionals.

Summary and Further Questions

This section has shown that conceptions of time are human constructions which are connected with power. The problem of time is complex. It is intertwined with the expectations and the conceptions of time of those in control; it is therefore a difficult problem, not one which can be easily solved by time management courses or by the provision of "extra time", as though time is a commodity which can be either manipulated or handed down, as a gift. My own frustrations with time were increased, over the years, as the momentum of change speeded up to the point where there was a perception that change had already occurred and "there was no time left." It also increased as my freedom decreased - as I found myself being monitored more and more closely within my own classroom and in the "backrooms" of the school, by administrators and by parents who were demanding more and more accountability.

What happens to the development of relationships with students and their parents when the teacher has a sense of "never having enough time" - when she feels increasingly hurried and unable to get things done? How is the quality of teaching and

of classroom life affected, and how does this, in turn, affect the public's view of education? In my own classroom experience as a researcher/teacher, the imposition of new demands and close observation by others were clearly disabling to me. How could I create a warm and trusting atmosphere conducive to effective communication, when I was feeling increasingly less able to meet all the demands of those to whom I was accountable? This gives rise to further questions about what might be needed for teachers to regain control of time within their own classrooms so that they can be freed to build relationships with the children and their parents, and to create a comfortable, unhurried environment where children may learn. It leads to questions, not only about teacher autonomy, but about about the nature of change and its effect on everything that has been happening in our education system in the past decade. Is change as "inevitable" as some futurists and policy-makers suggest - or is it merely a symptom of an increasingly precise linear construction of time which has finally produced a sense that the present time has become so compressed that change is constant?

The awareness that my problems with time were connected with larger issues of teacher autonomy, conceptions of the inevitability of change, and entrappment within cultural time structures, led to new questions about how we may better understand the conditions in which we each live, so that we can work together to enable rather than disable each other.

Materials

Another thread, woven throughout the narrative account, has to do with materials.

Class sets of textbooks and workbooks are not allowed at this school. Learning centers and open-ended activities are expected for all students.

"Is there no money to order materials?" I asked.

"No, nothing. Don't even think about it for a month. Just look around and see what you can find."

No money! It was like finding myself in a third world country, all of a sudden. Looking back, I wonder if the refusal to buy teaching materials stemmed from a lack of money or a problem in managing a budget, or was there something deeper involved? Were teachers being refused teaching materials because people in the higher echelons of the education system had decided that learning is better achieved without them? It is true that workbooks and textbooks are currently frowned on in many circles. Are budget restraints being used as an excuse to purge schools of such materials? I recently read about a principal who literally burned all the reading anthologies and teacher resource books in her school because she believed this was the only way to free her staff from them. It reminded me of the cultural revolution in China.

I can't help but long for the days when you simply had a set of textbooks and workbooks, and a teacher's resource guide to suggest interesting things to do with this age level. Although I have wholeheartedly embraced the philosophy of the activity-centered approach, I wonder how feasible it is to provide daily

activities for so many differences in abilities, backgrounds, and expectations. I fear that no matter what I do, some students and their parents will be dissatisfied.

The problem with materials was closely connected with the lack of time, because I was forced to find or prepare materials which I did not have in my classroom. Preparation of materials "consumed" time which could have been used for other purposes. The problem with materials was also connected with the expectations of others. The principal expected that learning would be better achieved without classroom sets of books. Many parents felt uncomfortable without classroom sets of books; without seeing such materials, it was difficult for them to understand what their children were learning. I found it difficult to "justify" the lack of textbooks, because I too, would have liked to use them for some subjects where I did not have the knowledge, experience, or time to select or develop materials myself. I knew, from my past experience, how useful professionally developed materials could be. I was embarrassed about the results of my make-shift programs and materials, which I believed should meet the unique needs of everyone but which, in reality, left almost everyone dissatisfied. I felt ashamed and embarrassed; I believed that a competent teacher should have been able to manage without textbooks "as a crutch." My problem with materials made me question my own competence. The remainder of this section will look at some other perspectives about the use of materials in elementary classrooms.

A Historical Picture

Historically in North America, the textbook was a basic tool in the classroom. Teachers were generally provided with a set of textbooks for each separate subject. By 1967, when I first began teaching, textbooks had become bright and colorful, and sets

of textbooks were accompanied by a "teacher's guidebook" which provided "activity," "enrichment" and "reinforcement" suggestions. Often sets of textbooks (one for each child) were accompanied by sets of workbooks. Most of these materials were produced by large publishers in the United States. These were affluent times in North America, and some school systems were able to buy more than one set of textbooks - each from a different publisher. At the same time, teachers were encouraged to use their own creative ideas, supplementing the textbook series with other materials. Large amounts of money were being poured into education, which was seen as important in winning the space race and the Cold War, and specialists were being hired in all subject areas to produce materials which were virtually "teacher-proof" - an idea which educators later frowned upon because of the implication that teachers were mere technicians who needed manuals to follow. From the publisher's point of view, textbooks were a big business. Contracts were signed, not with individual schools or school systems, but often with entire states or provinces.

Two decades later, changes in teaching methodologies arising from shifts in understandings about about learning and thinking (Connell, 1987) had created major shifts in the educational publishing business, especially concerning elementary education. Publishers had become aware of new classroom markets for a variety of learning resources, including collections of childrens' books, filmstrips and film loops, videotapes, audiotapes, specially prepared sets of pictures, and multi-faceted portfolios of background information on specific topics (Robinson, 1981). Instructors at all levels were seen to be looking for resource items in which books are only one item. To profit from this new market, publishers appeared at educational conferences with thicker, glossier, more colorful catalogues and samples of materials. Equipping a school with such an array of resource materials demanded a new flexibility in selecting what those materials should be. Because the variety was great and rapidly increasing, selections had be made to fit the teacher's specific needs. "Neither the principal nor

regional supervisor, and certainly not the more remote provincial department of education, can pick and choose the resource materials which individual teachers could use to best advantage" (Robinson, p. 18).

Changing Attitudes and Policies

With the vast array of new learning materials on the market, and an apparent change to activity-centered elementary education, the basic textbook appears to have fallen out of favour in elementary education. In my own city, I have observed that textbooks have been discouraged in some elementary schools, and forbidden in others. Although provincial educational policy makers still go through the process of analysing and approving textbooks, policy makers at the regional level sometimes look askance at schools which use textbooks. There is an attitude among some education groups that school textbooks are boring, incoherent, and 'dumbed-down' (Altbach et al, 1991), that they do not encourage critical thinking, that they are expensive, and that they mislead readers into assuming that they have been written by experts without bias (Frager & Vanterpool, 1993). Textbooks are also out of favour partly because of social and political issues arising from relationships between state controlled education and the textbook industry in the United States (Apple, Wong & Loveless, Keith, & Larson in Altbach et al, 1991) and because of fear, in Canada, that "highly capitalised projects could lead big publishers to claim more and more responsibility for what and how much a child learns" (Lorimer, 1984, p.91). They are out of favour, too, because of the promotion of curriculum ideologies which demand a change in teaching methods (Fullan, 1991). I have heard educational consultants criticising and even ridiculing textbooks, suggesting that "good" or "progressive" teachers use methodologies which are supported by the wide range of learning materials now available. Discouraged from using their traditional tools, some teachers are pressured into using less familiar

methodologies or "making do" with partial sets of books (Ryan, 1982). As a result, the formidable task of learning to manage new methodologies and selecting materials to support these methodologies is imposed on already full schedules. The alternative is trying to cope with traditional methodologies with partial and increasingly outdated resources.

Frager and Vanterpool (1993), in a point/counterpoint discussion, show that the use of textbooks can be viewed both positively and negatively. On the negative side, textbooks can provide a highly simplified view of reality. The rigid categories in textbooks could encourage students to think in dualistic ways that dichotomise context from text. This is a problem because, if critical thinking is an objective of education, knowledge should be conceived as multiple and relative. Since textbooks take so long to produce, they are always at least three to five years out of date; also, they are expensive, an important consideration at a time of limited budgets. Other arguments against a dependency on textbooks are sometimes articulated by supporters of the "project approach" (e.g. Katz & Chard, 1990), "continuous learning" (Alberta Education, 1990), and the "transformational curriculum" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1992), who suggest that multiple resources are more appropriate for programs supported by recent research about how children construct knowledge (Vgotsky, 1978; Kamii, 1985, 1989; DeVries & Kohlberg, 1990; Bruner, 1985; Kamilott-Smith, 1984) and how children learn relationally (Brown & Compione, 1984; Nelson, 1985; Slavin, 1987).

On the positive side, Frager and Vanterpool suggest many advantages to providing teachers with textbooks. Textbooks can be viewed as a tool that can provide a comprehensive array of information that challenges teacher and students to approach learning strategically - with the option of applying higher order thinking skills to topics as they arise. Textbooks can be seen also as efficient compilations of source materials, representing the analysis and synthesis of a wealth of information otherwise

unavailable or too technical for classroom use. "It is unreasonable to expect teachers and students to sift through raw data from which textbook information is derived" (p. 305). Frager and Vanterpool suggest that without the structure of good textbooks, students may experience confusion and frustration if required to gather, judge, evaluate, analyse and synthesise information on their own from a wide variety of sources - a confusion and frustration which, in my experience, may be felt by the teacher as well. Finally, although textbooks are expensive, they can be a cost effective way of making a wide variety of information available in easily accessible form. Another cost effective aspect of textbooks is the saving of teacher time and energy. This point is also made by Ornstein (1990) who describes research estimating that time spent developing new materials for a new program can run as high as 50 to 100 hours per hour of instruction, showing that the availability of textbooks can represent an enormous savings in teacher time and energy. From my personal experience as a writer and developer of teachers' resources, I do not believe that Ornstein's estimation is an exaggeration. I spent six weeks of eight-hour days to develop activities for a teachers' resource for one social studies unit - and this was *after* a subject expert had done all the research and compiling of information for the accompanying textbook. Many more hours were later spent by my publisher, assisting me with revisions, to ensure that all curriculum objectives were met, and that provincial guidelines were followed (Fitzsimmons, 1992a, 1992b) and educational objectives met. At the classroom level, even more hours would need to be spent in preparing materials required for each activity.

In Canada, considerations regarding the use of textbooks has been linked with the problem of obtaining Canadian materials (Hodgetts, 1968). Since the mid-1970s, the products of a "new wave" of small Canadian publishers have appeared on the market as a result of new government policy guidelines and incentives largely arising from the 1972 Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing (Lorimer, 1984);

however, more recent events such as the unprecedented amalgamation of publishers that has occurred in the past decade will inevitably have an impact on the production of American textbooks (Altbach, 1991) and on Canadian ones too.

Other considerations regarding the use of textbooks in Canada have involved demands to meet curriculum objectives defined at the provincial level, and (as a result of human rights legislation, and pressures from special interest groups) the fair representation of minority groups and avoidance of gender and religious bias.

The Problem of Materials from My Perspective as a Researcher/Teacher

As I discovered during my most recent experience as a researcher/teacher in an elementary classroom situation, much time and effort is required for classroom level decision-making regarding learning materials. Teachers must find out what materials are available, assess their value, compare prices, and make judgments in light of complex pedagogical purposes, school policies, and learning objectives set out by the provincial government. Targeted as "consumers" of a wide variety of new learning resources, teachers are bombarded with sophisticated advertising aimed at them, and are frequently required to do the kind of research and decision-making which was previously done by other people (librarians, consultants, and supervisors).

It is easy to see how the availability of such a variety of learning materials, combined with policy decisions which encourage their use, can not only make additional demands on a teacher's time, they can also contribute to a teachers' feelings of guilt. I remember feeling guilty when I was not taking advantage of the many wonderful materials which seemed to be available. When budget restraints made it impossible for me to order these materials, I felt guilty about not producing them myself. My guilt was enhanced when inservices showed how "simple" it is for teachers to produce their own learning materials. Furthermore, publishers had presented the materials in such

an appealing way that it was easy to conclude that methodologies utilizing these materials were better than methodologies which did not use them.

My narrative account repeatedly showed how these obligations and pressures - added to all the other tasks and duties of daily life in the classroom - led to my frustration, fatigue, and a preoccupation which distanced me from the children. I heard stories of how, in desperation - lacking time, and having to be ready each day with an array of activities for their students - teachers would resort to "quick fix" tactics - buying, out of their own pockets, materials from retailers such as Moyers. Such materials were less pedagogically sound and less appropriate for Canadian classrooms than the textbooks which the teacher had been denied. Other "quick fix" tactics could involve illegally photocopying from single copies of textbooks. I, too, resorted to "quick fix" tactics at times.

My efforts to develop better communication and understanding with students and parents were compromised because of the extra time and energy consumed in such tasks as finding, selecting or creating materials. Communication was also compromised because of my difficulty in providing parents with sound educational justification for "quick fix" tactics. My feelings of guilt made me less willing to explain my program to the parents; and my fear of being seen as incompetent often prevented me from complaining to my superiors.

The problem with materials complicated the flow of communication in other ways, too. Without comprehensive, carefully designed books, it was difficult to explain to parents the sequence and scope of their child's program. Without classroom sets of textbooks, some parents found it difficult to understand what was being taught; these parents had to be "educated" to learn how a program could be supported by a variety of resources, and they had to be told what was included in their child's particular program. I heard about many elementary schools hosting evening "open houses" in which new teaching approaches could be demonstrated and justified to

parents. Planning and implementing such evenings are, again, extremely time consuming. As one teacher put it, "now we have to not only teach the children, we have to teach the parents as well."

During my experience as researcher/teacher, I found that other difficulties in communication from school to home also arose from the use of multiple resources rather than textbooks. These problems occurred when a child missed school and the parent wanted to help him/her continue with the classroom program at home; or when a child was perceived as "weak" in some subject and the parent wanted to help at home; or when a child transferred from another school. In some cases, the use of a textbook would have been an aid to communication and continuity of program. Without textbooks, it was more difficult for me to explain the scope and sequence of some programs so that the parent could provide useful support.

Summary and Further Questions

As a researcher in an elementary teacher's position, I found that the obligation of obtaining and selecting materials at the classroom level could become a time-consuming and often frustrating burden, fraught with problems which could inhibit the flow of communication between home and school. This section has shown that these obligations or expectations were part of the relationship of teaching to changing economic and political forces, changing educational policies, and educational policies for change.

All this gives rise to many other questions. Although arguments against textbooks are frequently based on sound educational theory, is it feasible for a teacher to work without the aid of textbooks when she is responsible for providing activities for a class of children five hours per day? What are the costs of providing a teacher with the "opportunity" to select and develop her own materials? How can we explore

these costs in terms of: money, teacher time, teacher's self-esteem, relationships with students, communication with parents, and consistency of program continuity and quality? Is it possible to "prepare" teachers to select or develop a wide range of learning resources in all subject areas - even those subjects in which the teacher has limited expertise? Finally - and most importantly to this dissertation - what happens to relationships with parents and the public when a teacher is having difficulty putting policy into practice?

I am not suggesting that mandating classroom sets of textbooks would solve these problems. What I am suggesting is that teachers be given the opportunity to either assemble their own materials or to use high quality, pedagogically sound, professionally developed resources. Since teachers know their own strengths in some subject areas, their limitations in other subject areas, and their own particular classroom situations, I believe they should be trusted to decide whether assembling their own materials or using professionally developed resources is best for their particular classroom situation. Then, I believe, encouragement and support should be provided so that teachers are enabled to acquire the learning tools they choose and to use these tools wisely. Without the trust, support, and encouragement to acquire and use learning resources wisely, I believe that even the most experienced and competent teachers may find it difficult or impossible to create an effective learning environment in their classrooms.

Expectations

My narrative account reveals a continuous struggle with decision making regarding ideological issues and of trying to cope with changing and sometimes conflicting policy initiatives passed down through the hierarchical system. There was a fear of not meeting expectations, and at the same time, a question of whose expectations to try to meet.

It is as though battles waged at the theoretical level and in the popular press are being fought right here in my own classroom and in my own mind as I struggle with every decision I need to make.

Everyone seems to have different expectations for what their children should be doing. No matter what I do, I will displease someone.

I find myself avoiding an ideological debate with the parents of my students - constantly fearing an unpleasant confrontation.

I exhaust time and energy thinking about ways to justify day-to-day decisions, trying often unsuccessfully to fit them into conflicting structures created by policy makers at the provincial, regional, and school level.

The principal frequently comes into the classroom to see what we are doing. The principal told us that parents have a right to do this too.

I understand that we have an open door policy. We have to show that we have nothing to hide. Parents can come in any time they wish, and we had better be able to justify everything we are doing.

Justify what you are doing! You must be accountable! These phrases were to come up more and more often, not only at the school, but in the newspapers and at the bookstores. Teachers must be accountable. Nurses, doctors, everyone must be accountable! Everyone is having to justify what they are doing. Right from the first day of school, I felt I was being watched - by the principal who slipped silently behind me, and by the parents who behaved as though the classroom belonged more to them than to me.

The concern about expectations presented a difficult burden because the expectations were sometimes unrealistic and sometimes in conflict with one another. Along with the need to meet the expectations of others, comes the demands for justification and the requirements for accountability. Huge issues and questions arise from such concerns: issues regarding the purpose of education and the reasons underlying policy decisions; and questions regarding the roles of teachers, parents, and administrators. Since expectations varied so much, making decisions meant continually wrestling with different ideologies, philosophical views, and political standpoints. It was extremely difficult for me to do this kind of thinking while providing for the daily needs of the children. It gave me the feeling that no matter what activity I planned, someone would be dissatisfied, and then I would have to justify my decision.

As I engaged in informal conversations with parents on a daily basis, I became more and more aware of the wide variations in their expectations. I feared that further discussion would cause unpleasant confrontations. Because of this, I felt less eager to engage in the kind of discussions which may have improved communication and understanding.

Even after I felt I had earned the respect of the parents, I continued to be concerned about the expectations of the policy-makers and administrators within the

educational institution within which I worked. There were demands to be met and requirements to be filled. These demands sometimes conflicted not only with the ideologies and expectations of some of the parents, they also conflicted with my own mission and my sense of what I was able to do.

Having to be concerned with the expectations of others was frustrating because so much time was consumed in the preoccupation with large issues that there was a sense of not having enough time left to complete daily tasks and to develop relationships with the children and their parents. In this way, the concern with expectations was entwined with the problem of time, and with a feeling of guilt, because I could never manage to meet the expectations of everyone.

Educational Research Associated with Expectations

In Education, the descriptor most often used for "expectations" is "accountability". In the past decade, ERIC lists 3901 articles which have to do with accountability. It is interesting to note that under the broad heading of accountability, the following subjects are included: audits, competence, competency-based education and competency-based teacher education, consumer protection, contracts, cost effectiveness, education malpractice, legal responsibility, management by objectives, outcomes of education, performance, program effectiveness, program validation, and quality control. It is not difficult to see that the discussions about accountability would be likely to draw ideas from economics and law.

Looking at some of the other terms associated with accountability, we find that the word "outcomes" was first used to mean "results" in 1832. Here, another quotation provides a somewhat chilling foreshadow to discussions about outcomes based education which are so prominent today.

We do the man's intellectual endowment great wrong if we measure it by its outcome.

- Carlife. Bosswell's Johnson. III., 59.

In discussions about education, "outcomes" are sometimes used interchangeably with "objectives". Here, we find a word which, like "expectations" and "achievement", has a history linked with military acquisition. Originally, an objective was the point toward which the advance of troops was directed. Today, Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language defines an objective as something whose purpose is to be satisfied. The destruction of the effectiveness of an enemy's force is given as an example.

In my narrative account, the concern with expectations was entwined with frustrations about lack of time. There was the time absorbed in priorizing expectations and making decisions or taking sides when expectations conflicted. There was the problem of making expectations fit into my own beliefs, and the problem of finding ways to meet expectations within the reality of my teaching situation. Problems with feasibility led to frustrations; problems with fitting the expectations with my own beliefs led to a feeling of loss of self or spirit.

The feeling that I was accountable to so many groups was connected with my uncomfortable feeling of being "watched." Underlying this discomfort was the feeling that I was not trusted. My feelings are supported by an article on teacher accountability in Britain arguing that the best form of accountability lies not in inspections or examinations but in the present teaching force generating more public trust (Green, 1981). Another article, from Australia (Musgrave, 1984), argues against centralised and bureaucratised accountability, acknowledging that opposing forces are battling over whether to increase monitoring. In the United States, a reform movement in education has used fear of economic competition to mobilise the public in

pressing for more accountability of teachers. The conflict between the public's perceptions of the need to make teachers "accountable" and the teacher's need to be trusted, is described in an American article by Silver (1986) who shows that funding agencies want accountability, while teachers want the support, time and peace to work.

Not surprisingly, much of the pressure for "accountability" comes from the business community from which this word was originally derived. With their list of recommendations "for educational change for the purpose of economic well-being," the National Alliance of Business (1989) offered a "blueprint for restructuring education." Included in the recommendations are a call for "new measures of accountability of teachers, administrators, and management performances."

Much of the call for accountability is associated with outcomes-based education, objectives-driven curriculum, and performance and competency monitoring, concepts which use business or economics as a model. In my own province, in Canada, the drive for accountability in education is largely supported by the business community and by the current provincial government. In Alberta, one member of the public, Joe Freedman, was able to generate much publicity in his demand for educational reform. He used statistics of student achievement to show, on a widely advertised video (Freedman, Holmes, & Miller, 1993), how our schools have been failing to meet the competition of education systems in other countries, suggesting that a faulty educational system is the cause of an economic downturn. His efforts were successful in generating fear and distrust in the current education system; as I began to talk, informally, with parents about their understandings about education, several immediately mentioned the video and pamphlets which they had seen advertised in the newspaper. Such materials fuelled fears already generated by the well-publicized statistics which showed that Canadians ranked ninth out of fourteen countries in science and mathematics skills - a statistic which was seen as indicative of Canada's competitive disadvantage in an increasingly global marketplace. Those crying out for

reform tend to attack the methodologies of so-called child-centered education, blaming them for the failure of children to reach expected levels of achievement, and predicting that this failure will cause economic disaster in the future.

Educators protest that statistics need to be examined carefully - that, for example, a broader range of Canadian students are being compared with selected Asian and European students. Furthermore, they say, achievement tests can not possibly measure everything which our education system is attempting to accomplish. But, in the meantime, fear has been kindled. There are few people who have not seen such headlines as "schools are failing" and "our children are being cheated", and who have not formed strong opinions about how education should be accomplished.

The Relationship of My Life in the Classroom with the Larger Picture

The climate in my school seemed to be a microcosm of the climate in a larger society which had been agitated by fear and propelled by accountability models of business and law. When there were conflicts of expectations among different groups to whom I was accountable, it was as though the ideological battles were being played out in my own classroom. A closer look back at my particular situation reveals that the difficulties within the microcosm were not, however, simply a mirror of conflicts in the macrocosm. The concern with expectations was not simply a battle between different sides in an ideological struggle. Although this battle of ideologies was disabling because it had resulted in an atmosphere of fear and distrust at the school level, the concern with expectations in the classroom actually presented much more complex problems.

These problems, at the classroom level, involved having to simultaneously juggle a wide variety of expectations while providing immediate care for the children. There were the expectations of the provincial department of education, of my regional

school system, of my individual school, of each of the parents of my students, and of each of the students themselves. The expectations of the provincial department of education were articulated in such documents as vision statements (Alberta Education, 1990b) and in policy statements (Alberta Education, 1990a). These statements were not always consistent with one another. For example, the vision statement seemed grounded in an outcomes-driven attitude toward education, while the policy statement seemed grounded in concerns with human development. The regional school system also had its own mission statement and objectives, and each school was expected to define goals which met the approval of the regional school board and provincial department of education while also meeting the approval of the parents in their own community. In some communities (such as the one in which I found myself), the parents' expectations were so diverse that it was impossible to set goals which satisfied more than a small number of people at any one time. As a teacher, I found myself with the frustrating and extremely time-consuming burden of studying the expectations of everyone to whom I was accountable, of interpreting these expectations, and of "defending" the choices I made. This became especially difficult when it became apparent to me that the immediate needs of some of the children conflicted with other people's expectations for what should be happening in the classroom.

All parents expected me to be sensitive to their own child's particular problems, weaknesses, or strengths. The expectations of all these parents were supported by public education policy which suggested that I was "accountable" to see that my students' individual needs were met. They were also supported by my own belief in the importance of attending to the needs of the "whole" child, and by my belief in a transformational curriculum which puts the child (in his/her socio-cultural setting) at the center. In practice, however, I found that it was often impossible to meet so many diverse needs at the same time. I was continually having to make choices, and then to defend those choices.

Expectations for learning outcomes were not clear. Provincial government policy (Alberta Education, 1990) suggested that teachers in the province of Alberta were expected to both allow and encourage children to progress at their own rate. Each regional school system could interpret this policy in their own way. Some school systems, like mine, produced a set of expected outcomes and indicators which showed that provincial goals and objectives were being met, while at the same time, actively supporting the continuous learning policy, but leaving each school responsible for determining how this policy might be implemented. For some schools in my system, there was an introduction of radical changes which included combining grades or eliminating grades altogether. Parents moving from such schools were sometimes excited, confused or frightened about the impact of change. Their feelings were often intensified by reports in the media which sensationalized the debate about how the education of children should be undertaken. Some parents wanted guarantees that opportunities for continuous learning would still be provided; others wanted to know exactly what outcomes would be produced at the end of each school year. All parents wanted to be sure that their own children's learning needs would be met.

There was also a great diversity of expectations regarding teaching methodologies. At my school, the principal had expectations regarding teaching methodologies. Textbooks and workbooks were not allowed. Activity centers were encouraged for all subjects. Sometimes these expectations conflicted with my own sense of what was feasible, and with the parents' beliefs about the education process - beliefs which were formed by their own experiences in schools, by the media's frightening reports about the failure of activity-centered approaches, and even by television advertising of special kits such as "Fun With Phonics." A teaching strategy which pleased one parent was likely to displease another. Many parents were skeptical about the school's policy regarding the use of learning materials; I found myself having to defend this policy even though I was having difficulty putting it into practice.

Understanding such varied and often conflicting expectations and then trying to defend my choices absorbed large amounts of my time and often distracted me from my daily work as a teacher.

While the provincial government and the regional school board used testing to monitor how well I was meeting their expectations, my principal and several of the parents slipped, unannounced, into my classroom to watch me teach, to check if I was meeting *their* expectations. There were also the requirements that I provide written long-range plans for every subject and every program, justifying everything that I was doing, and showing that my plans were consistent with provincial, regional, and school expectations while meeting the needs of the individual students in my classroom.

Each day, I had to make a multitude of decisions and choices within my own classroom. Most of these decisions had to be made contextually and relationally. It would have been difficult to provide an ideological justification for them, yet I felt, each time someone came to watch what I was doing, that I must be able to provide such a justification. I had to be able to show that provincial, regional and school level policies were being implemented and that provincial and regional expectations and outcomes were being met, and at the same time, I had to show that my choices took into consideration the particular needs of each individual child.

My narrative account revealed the disabling effects of the preoccupation with the expectations of others. Preoccupation with the expectations of others resulted in loss of time and energy. It resulted in frustration as expectations conflicted; and it resulted in guilt because all expectations could never be met and all decisions could not be justified. Ultimately, it resulted in a loss of spirit. Probably worst of all, it resulted in a focus away from the children themselves.

Summary and Return to the Original Question

After exploring the idea that conflicting expectations in the classroom mirror larger battles for power outside the classroom, this section returned to my own particular situation where the complexity of the way various expectations appeared in my classroom had resulted in a preoccupation which was so disabling for me. The preoccupation with expectations was disabling because it consumed time and energy and caused frustration, guilt, and loss of spirit, and worst of all, a focus away from the children themselves. These conditions were not conducive either to good teaching or to the development of good working relationships with others. They lead to further questions about whether communication and understanding among educators, students, and parents can be accomplished without confronting questions of power.

Fear

Fear hung over us like a murky fog . . .

I wondered if they were watching me, especially because I was new, or because I was older than the others, or because, somehow, I was doing something wrong.

Everything we do is open to scrutiny.

I feel unprotected.

My objective, now, is simply to survive.

Fear appeared often in my narrative account. There was my fear of the parents and there was also my fear of those above me on the hierarchical structure of the educational institution. I feared both the parents and people above me because of the power which I believed they wielded. I feared them at first because fear was a part of the culture of this educational setting; later, I feared them because I had been attacked, and thought I may be attacked again.

The causes of fear were sometimes real and sometimes imagined, but the reactions were almost always disabling. Fear distanced people from one another. It caused a guardedness which inhibited the natural flow of conversation which could have improved communication and understanding. Fear made me so preoccupied with preparing to defend that I was less able to do the other things I wanted and needed to do.

Because fear became such a dominant thread, it absorbed space, and it crowded out and concealed other threads. It imposed its heavy weight on my spirit; and it concealed the children to the point where they were hardly visible at all.

I remember what it felt like to be afraid. I remember the desperate struggle to fit my program plans into structures which could be "justified" to the parents and to my superiors. I remember my frustration as this struggle absorbed so much of my time that it was difficult to plan and prepare daily activities and attend to the immediate needs of the children. Defence was a burden which weighed heavily on me. It took the joy out of teaching.

The remainder of this section will look at my situation in light of other perspectives of fear.

Fear in our Society

Anxiety has been an important topic of interest for almost fifty years. In fact, our times have frequently been described as the Age of Anxiety, ever since W.H. Auden's poem by that name appeared in 1947. A November issue of the Economist (1953) stated that anxiety characterized the main change to be found between the 19th and 20th century outlooks.

According to book retailers, most popular literature about fear would also be found under the headings "stress" or anxiety". There has been an enormous production of books and articles on this subject in the last half of the twentieth century.

The use of the word, "stress," in connection with human anxiety is a newer construct. In 1972, the word "stressful" was used for the first time to describe situations that tend to produce alarm. By 1978, stress was being connected with change. For example, "Are you always changing things in your life . . . changing jobs, changing residences . . . if so, subtract two years. Too much change is stressful" (Detroit Free Press, 1978).

During the past two decades, there has been an explosion of books and articles on stress. Many of these have appeared on best-seller lists; indeed, "stress" is considered to

be a "hot topic" by book publishers and retailers. Most books on stress are of the self-help variety; stress is seen as something which can be identified, diagnosed, and treated, a pattern which fits neatly into a modern society confident in the ability of people to gain control of any identified phenomena through scientific methodologies.

Fear as a Subject of Educational Research and Literature

Like popular literature, most educational research and literature about fear is listed under the descriptors "anxiety" or "stress". In fact, educational research from the past decade includes 3367 articles listed in ERIC under the descriptors "anxiety" or "stress". Most of the articles on stress describe techniques to handle psychological and/or physical tensions and their causes. There are suggestions included for adjustment, coping, counselling techniques, health education and relaxation training. The serious problem of teacher burnout (defined as "negative feelings and/or behavior resulting from unsuccessful attempts to cope with stress conditions") were the subject of 529 research articles published in the past ten years. Studies are cited from North America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, indicating that stress and teacher burnout have been a recent focus of attention in education in much of the English-speaking industrialised world.

Earlier conceptions of fear

Most research on stress is grounded in psychological theories developed in the twentieth century. It follows a medical model which seeks to find causal relationships, diagnose, and treat. In an effort to break down structures which have been imposed on our understanding of fear in the last half of this century, I look again at one of the earlier concepts of fear.

An early definition of fear was "to regard with distrust" (Oxford English Dictionary). If fear is to distrust someone, then the opposite of fear is trust. In contrast to the enormous number of articles on stress and anxiety, there were only 47 articles in ERIC on trust in the past decade. Only seven of these were directly related to education. One of these articles (Rothberg, 1984) is entitled: "Trust Development: the Forgotten Leadership Skill." It was indeed forgotten; there were few other articles in the next nine years on the topic of trust development as a leadership skill.

Unlike stress, trust is an old construct. As early as 1225 it was used to mean "confidence in or reliance on some quality or attribute of a person or thing" (Oxford English Dictionary). It appears that as the modern industrialised world has turned its gaze away from "trust", it has focused its attention on the treatment of new constructs of fear such as anxiety, stress, and burnout. This has happened at the same time as medical practice turned its gaze away from "health", focusing its attention instead on the treatment of identified symptoms of illness. Just as holistic practitioners now seek to re-focus attention on the total health of the person as a means to avoid sickness; in the same way, perhaps educators could look at the idea of "trust" as a way to avoid "fear", "anxiety", or "stress".

The Need for Trust

The need for trust emerges as another thread, previously hidden under the "fear", "anxiety" or "stress" which had been so prominent in the weaving of this narrative account. I had actually thought about trust as I began my assignment as a researcher/teacher, believing that a spirit of trust and mutuality would be important in the development of communication and deeper understanding with the parents of my students. What I had not known was how difficult trust would be to attain. I had expected to trust the parents of my students; instead, I found myself in an atmosphere of fear,

where I was warned that parents could go up to the highest authority with their criticism or complaints. I had expected the parents of my students to trust me; but to my great surprise, some of these parents did not appear to trust me to look after even the simplest tasks. Experiencing for myself the disabling effects of fear or lack of trust, I now believe that without a foundation of trust in the school and in the educational system, there can be little hope of achieving better communication and understanding among the people involved in the school.

Scanning our popular newspapers and magazines, however, it is soon evident that, unlike fear or anxiety, trust is not a characteristic of our society. In general, there is a sense of distrust of one another and a sense of skepticism about all our established institutions - our governments, our legal system, our health care system, our churches, and our educational system.

Established institutions are blamed for the economic downturn of the country. Distrust is inflamed by vocal members of the public such as Joe Freedman, a member of an organization called Albertans for Quality Education, who uses statistics to create fears that our students are not measuring up to the Japanese and to blame the educational institutions for bleak economic forecasts.

Trust or confidence is becoming harder to win. We live in a consumer society where much of our economic system is built on merchandising of goods. The public is accustomed to highly sophisticated and expensive advertising techniques. Furthermore, advertising has convinced people that they should expect the best in products and service; this includes the most beautiful, the most popular, and the most stylish. It is little wonder that it is difficult for the public to trust institutions which do not appear to measure up to the standards of excellence they have come to expect as experienced consumers.

In the past, trust was earned over time as good reputations were built within a community over the years. The disintegration of the community resulting from increased

urbanisation and more transient lifestyles means that reputation, heritage or tradition can no longer be expected to provide a foundation for trust. Rapid changes in community mean that trust must be earned again and again.

Such trust is not easily attained in a society where people are brought up to distrust rather than trust each other. Children are taught to fear strangers, to lock doors, and to protect themselves and their belongings. As they grow older, they learn about their "rights" and how to demand them. Anyone who is not careful in closing a deal or making a contract (even a marriage contract!) is seen to be a fool. This is in stark contrast to the previous generation which grew up in rural communities, trusting their neighbours and having faith in local institutions and organizations which had served them, their parents, and their parents' parents for many years.

The small community, where a person could trust a neighbour, has been replaced with a sense of global community resulting from technological advances which have enabled the media to bombard the public daily with news of a multitude of global events. Bibby and Posterski (1992) point out that the information explosion has not been matched with accelerated reflection. As a result, people have begun to see problems everywhere.

> "Since at least 1976, Canada's dominant buzz-word has been 'crisis' . . . issues have been virtually unlimited . . . . The old story says, if you cry wolf too many times, no one will believe there really is a wolf out there. But until we know for sure it's all a game, someone's crying wolf shakes us up more than a little. (Bibby, 1992, p. 73)

Looking at how sophisticated marketing has created high expectations, how the destabilization of small communities has caused the disintegration of traditional foundations for trust, and how fast communication and media hype have resulted in the public's constant reminder of new uncertainties in our lives, it is not difficult to

understand the public's current distrust of its institutions and the people who work within them.

The Media's Role in Fuelling Fear and Distrust in our Education System

Distrust in the education system has been fuelled in recent months with increasing numbers of reports in the media which suggest that schools are "failing" or "cheating children". A Globe and Mail article by Lewington (1993a) is an example of the kind of publicity which alarms an already anxious public. "The myths of education are currently fuelling an increasingly political and polarised debate," the article states, echoing the warnings of curriculum theorists (Miller and Seller, 1985; Ornstein and Hunkins, 1993) and best-selling authors such as Toffler (1993), intensifying anxieties resulting from an increasing number of press releases about drop-out rates and low achievement in schools, and at the same time, creating welcome publicity for Lewington's new book, Overdue Assignment (1993b).

A recent article in Maclean's Magazine (Dwyer, 1994) is another example of the publicity which both exploits and inflames the current distrust of the education system across Canada. This article cites an opinion poll which showed that 46 percent of Canadians believe education is worse today than it was 25 years ago. One mother is quoted as saying: "You start to feel as though your child is a computer into which schools are placing a stupidity virus" (p. 44). Another parent is quoted as saying, "I am not a teacher basher but I think it's time we all jump in and get the ball rolling" (p. 49). Maclean's describes how the business community is also keeping a particularly sharp eye on public schools. "Education has become everyone's business," Maclean's quotes the president of the Learning Partnership, an organization devoted to creating closer ties between school and the private sector (Dwyer, 1994, p. 47). Certainly, articles like these reinforce the idea that the education system has lost the public's trust.

Fear in My Classroom Experience

My narrative account showed how fear and the underlying thread of distrust had a disabling effect on my work and on my ability to develop the warmth and sense of mutual trust necessary for building relationships with the parents of my students. It showed how my fear was related to the expectations of others and how it was entwined with the emphasis on accountability and justification, problems which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

If I had remained at my school, complaints about my "sense of fear" may have resulted in help in the form of "stress" or "anxiety" management, since my observable behavior, toward the end of my three months as researcher/teacher, matched many of the symptoms of stress described in popular psychology books (e.g. Parker, 1977, p. 47). My resignation might have been seen as a symptom of "burnout." When we are freed from such recent constructs as "stress", "anxiety" and "burnout" we are sometimes able to understand things in different ways. Here, I was able to uncover another thread which needs much more consideration: trust.

Summary and Return to the Original Question

My look at fear pointed to educational research and literature which tends to concentrate on newer constructions of fear such as "anxiety" and "stress," subjects of great interest within our larger society as well. Since it became apparent that both anxiety and stress are recent human constructs, I looked further in an attempt to free my analysis from the inhibitions or assumptions inherent in these constructs. This search led to an underlying thread - one which has been largely ignored in education: the need for trust. In doing so, I began to see how conditions in my school may have been related to the

attitudes of the public (attitudes frequently fuelled by a media which has such a powerful affect on our lives).

It was clear that fear and distrust were disabling, not only to the flow of communication between home and school, but also to my own ability to teach. I became so afraid of appearing incompetent that I actually became less competent.

This leads to new questions related to the problem of communication and understanding among the people in a child's home and school environments: Is it possible to build trust in an institution which is part of a larger, distrustful society which is angry, confused, and fearful of the future? If fear and distrust disable teachers from doing their best work, how does a crippled educational system then appear to an already anxious generation of parents and to a public already fearful of the future? How can these very large problems be approached?

Further Uncoverings

Guilt

Tightly entwined with the threads or themes in my narrative account is a dark thread which eventually covers some of the others. This thread is characterized by a persistent belief that a competent teacher should not be defeated by difficulties and frustrations.

I know that I am a good teacher. I should be able to do this.

I hate to feel like a failure. Next time, I will do better; I will be perfectly prepared.

I should have organized my math program by now.

I should have been better prepared for the meeting. The parents expected a more polished presentation.

I should have checked about school board policy before making the announcement about the field trip.

I should not have asked the parents to come in to see me.

I should have done more joint planning with the other grade two teacher.

I should not have missed the inservice session.

I have been neglecting the needs of the children who do not speak English.

I have been paying too much attention to the boys, and too little to the girls.

I should have known Cassandra would be upset if she was not with her friends.

I should have helped Dawn get a bus pass so she can get to school on time.

I should have checked with last year's teacher so that I could follow a familiar routine.

I should be able to get my lessons prepared in time.

I should not have talked back to the principal.

Maybe Laura's right, maybe I'm getting too old to change schools, maybe I'm getting too old to teach.

The feeling of guilt is closely connected to the feelings of fear: fear of being viewed as incompetent; fear of losing one's job, one's credibility, and one's stability; and even fear of growing old.

This is all too much, I want to quit," I sobbed to my husband. But of course I can not quit. Teachers are professionals. They can not just quit their jobs like other people.

Have I become one of those older people who can't cope with work any more? I used to think that people who went on stress leave were incompetents who just couldn't change with the times. Now it has happened to me. It is not called stress leave; it is called a

medical leave, but I know the pressures at work had a lot to do with it.

This thread is dangerous because it could hide the others. It could result in an unwillingness to let others know about problems and frustrations. It could contribute to a guardedness or dishonesty which inhibits communication and the development of understanding of the real difficulties in education. It could also contribute to a loss of spirit so destructive to teaching and any related activities.

Loss of Spirit

At the beginning of the narrative account, there were frequent entries which suggested a happy and enthusiastic spirit.

I was delighted.

I felt proud.

I could hardly wait.

This was the kind of teaching I loved.

I felt hopeful that this would be a successful year.

As this cheerful spirit became tangled in a myriad of frustrations and conflicting expectations, and darkened by fear and guilt, it became lost from view, re-emerging in a darker form.

I plodded along with my day-to-day duties and responsibilities.

Somehow, I have to manage my lessons for the rest of the day.

When the party was over, I stood, exhausted, amid the debris of peanut scramble shells and disarranged tables and chairs.

I was unable to control the tears.

I felt as though a broomhandle was being thrust into my stomach.

I sighed. It had been a long day.

Feeling betrayed, I came home in tears. "That's it!" I said to my husband. "From now on, I'll be like Calvin in the cartoon. My body can go to school, but my spirit will stay at home!"

How strange that I would remember, now, what my cooperating teacher had said twenty-five years ago when I was student teaching. "Don't ever lose your spirit! That's what makes a wonderful teacher!" Of course teaching suffers when the spirit is gone. Yet, I am sure that many do. Unlike me, many teachers do not have a choice. With mortgages to pay, and children of their own to raise, they must continue to plod along, year after year - with their spirits left at home. What happens to children when their teachers are leaving their spirits at home?

My narrative account ends with my realization that only by removing myself

from my teaching situation could I reclaim my spirit. Battered by fear, conflicting expectations, and everyday frustrations such as lack of time, yet troubled by the feeling that all these things were my fault, it had been impossible to create the conditions necessary for developing the comfortable flow of communication and the depth of understanding which I had hoped to develop with my students and their parents.

Further Thoughts on Loss of Spirit

This section of our "conversation" should be read slowly, with time for reflection on what "soul" or "spirit" might mean.

Wonder Walks and Butterfly Wings: The Place of the Soul in Education

When my children were small, I used to take them for wonder walks. We would splash in puddles, and kick dried leaves, listen to birds and feel the warm sun on our backs. It was always joyful, and sometimes it was even more than that. Sometimes a harmonious chord was struck deep in someone's soul, and it was as though, for just a heartbeat, the Universe stood still - trembling, like the delicate dew drop which catches a glint of silver sun, before it falls.

Autumn Days

I'm lying with my back to the ground

As I lie

I don't make a sound.

Above me is a yellow tree

And from it leaves fall silently.

Above the yellow tree is sky,

With cornflower blue so high, so high.

I'm full of wonder, full of why.

-child, age nine

Can you remember something that stirred your soul? You probably can not describe the feeling, but wonder and joy seem a part of it. For children, such moments sometimes come at quiet times such as these:

Here I sit thinking

Feeling content and tranquil

Like high birds and clouds

-child, age ten

Or sometimes such moments may come during robust play and laughter, like this:

Climbing

I like climbing,

I've climbed a tree,

(tee nbed a building

But guess what I

like climbing best?

Why, I liked climbing

the crystal steps.

They towered high,

very high until

they seem to reach the sky.

Then my eyes could see

A magic land just for me,

But then a brisk wind

blew me

Into the tallest

nearest tree,

Then I could see

that dreaming was

the life for me.

-child, age eight

Or sometimes, simply when a friend takes your hand.

I like you

You like me

Let's go down there

Through the air

On a saucer

Up to space

Like lace.

Let's turn over

to Mars.

Let's go home now,

We've gone quite far.

Fall out the saucer

And climb down

the sunbeams

past the moon.

I'm going home

On butterfly wings.

child, age seven

There were no references to wonder walks in the narrative account of my most recent teaching experience. With a preoccupation with "justification" and "accountability", there was "no time left" for the nourishment of the soul - either the souls of the children or of their teacher.

Of course, our society seldom talks about the soul, and there are many who deny its importance or even its existence. Perhaps, for those people, the soul has been dormant for a long time. Such people no longer understand that, unfed, the soul diminishes, just as unused limbs grow weak, and as eyes too long in darkness grow blind.

It is not surprising that such people often neglect to consider the soul when they talk about educating the "whole" child. They include the physical and mental

diminished human nipples. What happens when an entire society puts forth its efforts to produce fit bodies and highly trained minds, yet neglects the souls of its people? The answer is everywhere around us, in mountainsides denuded for paper to feed the corporate machine, in ecosystems destroyed for profit, in polluted oceans and air, in friendships neglected, in children unloved, in perceptions that the very things that make life worth living are not really important at all.

Teachers, Schools, and Loss of Spirit

Our future surely depends on teachers who are wise human beings themselves; teachers who are, themselves, strong in body, mind, and soul.

Yet our mechanisation of time and our preoccupation with expectations, objectives, goals, and development of strategies and materials to meet those expectations has left teachers with "no time and energy" for the nourishment of their own souls. How can such teachers build relationships with children and their parents and achieve deeper understandings of the complexities of life and education, if their own souls are dying?

Perhaps it is the increasing intensity of soul-battering forces which has led to an increasing number of theorists and writers who are willing to look at the possibility that perhaps, after all, even in our highly secularised society, the soul or spirit may still exist. Whitehead (1967) first used the startling term "soul murder" in reference to education in his Aims of Education and Other Essays. Recently, this idea has gained attention with the writing of Hunt and Webster (1982) and Foster Walker (1993). Thomas Moore (1992), James Hillman (1992), and Leonard Shengold (1989) also talk about the neglect or loss of soul in our society and in education. There seems to be a general consensus among these writers that the loss

in education. There seems to be a general consensus among these writers that the loss of soul has become a characteristic of our society and of the institutions which have been created within it.

I wonder if I would have identified my "loss of spirit or soul" if I had not previously studied with Foster Walker (1993) in a course in educational philosophy, a course in which the idea of soul murder was discussed. Having previously considered the possibility of soul murder, I saw connections between the idea of soul murder and the three references I had made to the soul or spirit in my narrative account: 1) the remark (at the beginning) that I had intended to devote myself, body and soul, to my mission this year; 2) the anguished cry (toward the middle) that I would, like Calvin in the cartoon, have to "leave my spirit at home", and 3) the memory of a cooperating teacher saying to me, twenty-five years ago, "Never lose your spirit; that's what makes you a wonderful teacher."

If I had not been aware of "soul murder" as a possibility, I might, instead, have used one of the "Grand Narratives" of modern times (Schostak, 1991) to identify my difficulties. I might have looked upon my problems as, for example, "stress", "burn-out", "difficulties in coping with change," "incompetence", "inefficiency", or "poor time management". Fearing the consequences of such labelling, I may have been silenced. Instead, my inquiry has enabled me to uncover problems or situations previously hidden from view (Aaronwitz, 1991; Bloom, 1987).

Through our "conversation", my readers may have seen other threads or arrived at other insights connected with their own background and experience. As a subsequent chapter will explain, the most important thing is not that we "defend" the insights which have become apparent to us, but that we continue the conversation, continuing to look closely and thoughtfully at real-life experiences which are neither easily understood nor easily managed.

Other Perspectives

Having explored a number of themes or threads in relation to each other, in relation to my particular experiences, and in relation to the larger world, my inquiry can proceed by looking at the tangle of threads from other perspectives. Informing two of these perspectives are literature concerning the home, school, and community, and literature concerning the school as a workplace. This chapter will discuss this literature in relation to the narrative account of my experience.

Communication and Understanding among Home, School, and Community

The need to develop better communication and deeper understandings among people in the home, school, and community has resulted in a large body of literature on this subject in recent years. This section will review some of the ideas and suggestions which have been expressed in this literature, relating it to my own recent teaching experience which has been the focus of this study.

Rich (1991) suggests that the family has been the forgotten factor in school success. Problems facing North American education, she writes, are not problems of the school alone; to be resolved they must address the relationship between the home and school. She makes a number of recommendations for school policymakers to enhance the impact of education by involving the family. Her recommendations include supporting and assigning educational responsibilities to the family, providing families with practical information they need to help educate their children, responding to family diversity and differing parent needs, encouraging an active role for fathers, encouraging family self-help and self-sufficiency, supporting family involvement as an integral and funded part of the school's services, providing teachers with training and information to help them work well with families, and providing for family

involvement at all levels of schooling.

Galen (1991) reviews research evidence which confirms the benefits of parental involvement in children's education, suggesting that the cause-effect relationship between student achievement and parental participation has been consistently strengthened over the past three decades. She describes recommendations from a research-based policy statement of the National Association of State Boards of Education (1988) which suggests that: primary programs in particular should promote an environment in which parents are valued as major influences in their children's lives and are essential partners in the education of their children; parents should be included in decision making about their own child and on the overall early childhood program; opportunities should be ensured for parents to observe and volunteer in classrooms; exchange of information and ideas between parents and teachers should be promoted. Using a case study as an example, Galen asserts that the exodus of elementary teachers from the profession today is more often due to practitioners' reactions to the lack of respect and worth afforded them by society. She suggests that increasing parental participation in elementary schools generally, and in classrooms specifically, could modify the public's valuing of education.

Bjorklunk and Burger (1987) emphasize that communication with parents is an essential part of early childhood education programs, asserting that parents want and need to know about their child from the school's perspective and that the school benefits also when teachers seek to develop a more comprehensive understanding of a child's background. Recommending parent-teacher conferences as an important part of the communication process, Bjorklunk and Burger suggest guidelines for undertaking such conferences.

Davis (1989) describes one parent involvement program in a mixed cultural community and identifies several keys to its success: sending thank-you notes and letters of praise to parents and students, sending letters to parents in four languages

and conducting meetings in six languages simultaneously, and maintaining an attitude that parents should be provided with information about even the smallest details about the school program. The importance of involving parents of children from different cultures is also addressed in an editorial by Wellhousen (1993) about children from nontraditional families and in a booklet provided by the Mulitculturalism Program for teachers, childcare workers and community recreation leaders (Canadian Department of the Secretary of State, 1991).

For the past decade, Joyce Epstein has been conducting research on teachers' practices of parent involvement and the effects of family-school connections on students, parents, and teachers. In an interview for Educational Leadership (Brandt, 1989), Epstein outlines five types of parent involvement. Types of involvement include the basic obligations of parents to provide positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior; the basic obligations of schools to parents to provide communication in the form of report cards, memos, and conferences; parent participation in school events and programs; parent involvement in learning activities at home; and parent involvement in governance and advocacy. Providing examples of expected outcomes linked to each type of involvement, Epstein asserts that most parents at all grade levels want and need information and guidance from their children's schools and teachers, and that all schools have the opportunity to build strong partnerships with parents.

Wolf and Stephens (1989) write that by communicating effectively with parents, teachers may be able to save some students from school failure. They provide a list of do's and don'ts for informing parents about children's school programs. Suggestions for do's include beginning conferences with positive information, encouraging parents to discuss and clarify as needed, and explaining how instruction is individualized and how programs are evaluated. Suggestions for things teachers should not do include: overwhelming parents with too much detailed information, defending an

archaic grading system ("if it's school policy, say so!") and describing teacher's own problems (p. 28).

Bauch (1989) describes a "trans-parent" school model which links phones with commuters, suggesting that this will enable teachers to communicate with parents daily - something which will "delight both parties" (p. 32).

Seeley (1989) describes a "new paradigm for parent involvement" which "empowers all the players" (p. 48) by allowing teachers and parents to work together collaboratively. Describing a case study of two accelerated schools, he asserts that "the new level of professionalism and the new type of accountability that is developing around it could not exist without the new relationships with parents, students, and the community" (p. 48).

Utterback and Kalin (1989) describe a community-based model of curriculum evaluation in which qualified volunteers were invited to evaluate programs. Local scientists, administrators, science teachers, parents, students, and graduates were all invited to assess a science program. The review committee members all identified similar strengths and weaknesses. Benefits included saving money, receiving high-quality program evaluations, and strengthening school/community relationships.

Educational policy statements in both Canada and the United States include the importance of parents as partners in their recommendations for curriculum development and implementation (e.g. Alberta Education,1990; National Association of State Boards of Education in the United States, 1988), and a large number of organizations provide information for teachers and parents for working effectively together (e.g. Alberta Association for Young Children; Canadian Association for Young Children; Early Childhood Education Council; Canadian Committee on Early Childhood; Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta; National Association for the Education of Young Children; Association for Childhood Education International; Canadian Council on Children and Youth; International Reading Association; and

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

Nathan (1989) writes about the importance of providing public school choice for parents. He describes this trend in the United States, showing how currently more than 40 states have developed some form of school choice plan, explaining that the majority of parents felt they had a right to choose among public schools. Offering choice, he asserts, can result in rapid, dramatic reforms in schools. This trend has been recently echoed in Alberta, where Goal 2 of the Three-Year Business Plan Schedule for Restructuring Education (Alberta Education, 1994) targets providing more choice and increasing parental involvement by removing local attendance boundaries and piloting charter schools. The measures of success of this program will be: the percent of parents who are satisfied with their children's schools, the number of school jurisdictions where students may choose local schools, the number of employing organizations (e.g. business, industry) who are offering educational opportunities to students, and the percent of parents, businesses, and community representatives who are satisfied with their role in decision making.

Among the many other recent references for encouraging better home/school/community relations are books about parents and teachers as partners (Baskwill, 1989; Hepworth-Berger(1991), a book about changing trends concerning families in Canada (Baker, 1990), a handbook for involving parents (Lyons & Robbins, 1984), and an educator's guide to working with parents with the intriguing title, Beyond the Bake Sale (Henderson, 1986).

The large amount of literature on the subject of home/school/community relations suggests that this is, indeed, a topic of great interest and concern to a large number of people. In a well-attended graduate class instructed by Lorene Everett-Turner at the University of Alberta in the fall of 1993, practising teachers identified the following needs: to know more about ways to facilitate communication among teachers, parents and community; to understand the effect families play in their child's

progress in school; to explore a variety of ways of involving parents or community members in activities related to their child's education; to communicate in a meaningful way with parents and the community; and to consider realistic roles for parents, teachers, and the community to play in education. The students in this course seemed to agree with the assertion that it is imperative that teachers work together with parents as partners to ensure that all children experience an optimal education (Everett-Turner, 1986). At the same time, I noted a high level of frustration among these people as, in practice, they were experiencing difficulties with respect to this task. I remember, in particular, one young kindergarten teacher with dark circles under her eyes. She was trying to implement many of the suggestions to improve parent involvement, but she never had enough time or energy. She seemed so exhausted. Another young woman told me that she had only been teaching for four years and she felt she was burned out already. I remember, too, the resentment against one teacher who single-handedly planned and produced a science fair to encourage parent's interest in their children's science program.

"Now we'll all be expected to do this," one obviously tired teacher muttered. "Now we'll not only have to teach the children; we have to teach the parents too."

As I began to undertake my study, I, too, began to experience a high level of frustration. I was astonished to find myself in circumstances so disabling that I no longer felt I could pursue my initial intentions to improve communication and understanding among myself, my students, and their parents. The surprising insight for me was that I realized, for the first time, how it feels to be a teacher who no longer *wants* to communicate with the parents of her students because her time is already filled and because there is already a tension among the expectations of the many people to whom she is accountable. The change in my own attitude was shocking to me, because, in the past, I had always welcomed interchanges with the parents of my students. (This was one reason why I had initially felt so optimistic and enthusiastic about this study).

I began to understand how it is for teachers to feel guilty when they are suddenly unable to do what they had intended or hoped to do.

The analysis of my narrative account has helped me to see how problems in communicating and understanding among home, school, and community can be linked with other difficulties in a teacher's life. Some of these difficulties have to do with the very complex problem of time and the problems resulting from policy changes regarding teaching materials. Others have to do with theoretical debates that evolve into battles in the classroom (or at least, in the teacher's mind) as the teacher is required to simultaneously meet the expectations of people with different orientations toward education. All these are linked with problems in developing good working relationships in a climate of fear or distrust, which may have been kindled initially by difficulties in communication and understanding and then fuelled by a media hype which suggested that "everything is a crisis" (Bibby, 1992). Under such circumstances, a teacher's "loss of spirit" can indeed interfere with ability and even desire to communicate more effectively with parents, and this in turn, can make public education look worse to the public.

The literature on relationships among home, school, and community recognises the importance of working effectively together, and frequently provides sound models for doing so; however, my study has made me realize that such models can not be implemented effectively in a harried environment in which fear, tension, distrust, and conflicting expectations have a disabling effect on everything the teacher is trying to do. My recent experience, and my analysis of it, has taught me that if we are interested in the positive outcomes of better communication and deeper understanding, we need to be sure that we are providing the necessary conditions for teaching and learning so that there is something positive for us to communicate about.

The School as a Workplace

My analysis of my narrative account suggested links between difficulties in communication and understanding and disabling working conditions. This section will look briefly at some of the literature connected with the school as a workplace and teachers as professionals, and explain how my own study could generate some new directions for future practice and study.

There is a large body of literature focusing on the school as a workplace and on the sociology of professions. In the past ten years, there has been a great deal of interest in these topics, particularly in the area of educational administration. Lieberman and Miller's (1984) book, Teachers: Their World and their Work, has become a classic in this area of study, building on the work of such researchers as Waller (1967), Jackson (1968), Sarason (1971), and Lortie (1973) who have attempted to understand the world of teachers in all its complexity. Lieberman and Miller use as sources participant observations, teacher logs, professional literature on school reform, field studies, interview transcripts, and their own personal experiences, formulations, and reformulations about life in schools in their efforts to develop new perspectives and draw implications for teaching at all levels. Goodlad et al (1991) have also produced well-known writings about the reality of teaching, exploring such dimensions as teacher professionalism, the moral considerations of teaching, and the impact of accountability, trust, and ethical codes on practice.

In Alberta, in 1992, the Alberta Teachers' Association responded to widespread concerns about the realities confronting many of the province's teachers by focusing on the question "What is the present situation for teachers in the province of Alberta?" Drawing from 250 submissions from teachers across the province, and also from numerous group discussions, an interim report was produced which provided a forum for teachers' voices. Concerns expressed were related to a combination of trends,

developments and innovations that were affecting professional practice. Although the concerns were diverse, the voices of these teachers parallelled my study because of the intensity of frustration which we all were experiencing. It was clear that although their reasons varied, many teachers felt disabled, just as I felt during my recent experience as a teacher/researcher.

In the report, Trying to Teach (Alberta Teacher's Association, 1993), there were echoes of some of the dominant threads which I identified in my narrative account. For example, there was wide agreement that too much is expected of teachers and schools and that some expectations are contradictory. There was also agreement that time in the workplace has become a critical problem, particularly in an era when so much change has been imposed from various sectors of the educational community. There was also a strong assertion that teachers must have the right to make professional decisions in the classroom and in the school, and that political and administrative policies which dictate methods of teaching are anti-professional. Too often, the report states, teachers have been held accountable for decisions they did not make.

These complaints, which were passionately articulated by teachers in the Trying to Teach document, are supported by quotations in literature which has been cited in a follow-up report (Alberta Teacher's Association, 1994). Calling for greater teacher autonomy, Carl Glickman (1989) asserts that there is not (and never will be) scientifically validated best practices of supervision and teaching. Rather, he says, best practice means what is best for students by those teachers closest to them; schools will not improve until those people closest to the students - teachers - are given the choice and responsibility to make informed decisions about teaching practice. Similarly, Barker (1993) suggests that rather than dictating the work of teachers, administrators, politicians, and "experts" should concentrate on facilitating the work of teachers. Donaldson (1993) also asserts that leaders and teachers need to redefine

their purposes and relationships, predicting that working well together will be an even greater challenge by the mid-1990s as physical and human resources continue to be in short supply and as good will and optimism are depleted by a decade of diverse reforms.

Some of the discontent seems to be related to recent attempts to reform or restructure schools. Writers such as Darling-Hammond (1993) point out that school reform can not proceed without recognising the complexity of the conditions under which teachers work. Fullan (1993) also writes about the importance of recognising the complexity of educational problems in implementing productive educational change. In the province of Alberta, teachers have said that they feel that the present way in which educational innovations and developments are implemented are deeply flawed.

> One of the major criticisms is that teachers are often not even consulted . . . Too many developments are seen as 'top-down' and often are seen as being inspired by administrative whim, political expediency, a desire to be on the 'cutting edge' or a desire for a 'quick fix'. Other directives are seen as unproven, or unsupported by research; frequently they are deemed to be 'good in theory but impossible to implement in practice,' or as presenting difficulties when combined with other changes or 'classroom realities.' (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1994, p. 14)

Certainly the past ten years, in Alberta and in North America, has been a time in which an unprecedented number of change proposals for the improvement of education have been contemplated, legislated, and regulated at several administrative levels. Richardson-Koehler (1987) describes how most of these changes have been proposed by legislators and their aides, policy analysts, journalists, educational bureaucrats, and the general public. For many of these proposals, Richardson-Koehler writes, the basis for change has not been clear. Even when research has been cited as a basis for proposed changes, the changes have been impossible for practitioners to

perform and have had serious, unintended consequences. Since many of the imposed changes had been "conceived in an atmosphere of distrust and a refusal to acknowledge the complexity of educational practice . . . the complexity in combination with the variety of educational settings rendered common procedures for meeting goals inappropriate and often humiliating to those who must implement them" (p. 42).

It is this feeling of humiliation and frustration which I experienced during my time as teacher/researcher and which I sensed in some of the impassioned protests from practising teachers, voiced in the report, Trying to Teach. It is also a feeling which was observed by Jevne and Zingle (1993), who, after interviewing Alberta teachers suffering from long-term disability, suggested that "the timing of the implementation of Alberta Education initiatives is not consistent with available resources, system planning and teacher preparation. Ineffective implementation of change contributes to the insidious onset of health disabling conditions by furthering the experience of feeling less valued and less capable" (p. 244).

Recent shifts in attitudes regarding the research on teaching have been particularly timely in beginning to meet the urgent need to build awareness about the potential destructiveness of changes mandated without sufficient understanding of teaching situations. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) write:

> Public concern over the quality of teaching and the strong press to improve education through policy make research on the cultures of teaching particularly timely . . . . Knowledge about the cultures of teaching can inform predictions about how teachers are likely to respond to policy initiatives and guide efforts to shape those responses. Policies that enhance the conditions of teaching are also needed to attract and hold talented individuals and to support their best efforts. (p. 505)

The difficulties experienced by teachers as a result of tensions between the

organizational and personal aspects of teaching have been the subject of the analytic and empirical literature on teaching (e.g. Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Dreeben, 1973; Jackson, 1968). It has also been recognised in research which has described teachers' own views of their work (e.g. Biklen, 1983; Hall, 1982; Lampert, 1981; McPherson, 1972) and in research in which teachers have been given opportunities to speak for themselves (e.g. Freedman, Jackson & Boles, 1983). The surge of teacher research in a variety of forms - action research, class-based writing research, narrative inquiry, journal writing, essays, classroom, inquiry, oral inquiry - is becoming widely recognized for its role in teachers' professional growth, teachers' development of policy and curriculum, change in schools generally, and the development of a knowledge base about teaching (e.g. Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Elliot, 1987). In many ways, such studies provide echoes of some of threads which I identified in the narrative account which was central to my study; particularly those threads which (when held up in different lights) revealed complexities in a teaching situation which, although minor by themselves, can combine to result in strong feelings of guilt, frustration, and unhappiness which can lead to an inability to work effectively.

Although the follow-up report to Trying to Teach, strongly recommends (among other suggestions) an increase in teacher autonomy as one means of providing the necessary conditions for improving educational practice, my own study suggests that while more autonomy may have been helpful in enabling me to teach more effectively and to work better with my students and their parents, it would not have solved the complex and difficult problems which I faced. My devastating (and at the same time extremely illuminating) experience has led me to believe that in this era in which our society's sense of time seems to be so compressed, and in which many professionals are experiencing the impact of distrust and unrealistic and often conflicting expectations from the large variety of people and groups to whom they are accountable, teachers'

efforts need to be *facilitated* through the provision of time and material resources and the nurturing of a cheerful and caring workplace in which they can be enabled to do their work in peace. I have come to believe that people intent on school improvement should refocus their attention on helping to create teaching and learning environments that are more trusting, more caring, more joyful, and more hopeful so that teachers can more happily and effectively attend to their students' learning.

The importance of a nurturing environment is not, of course, a new one. Lieberman (1969) found teachers to be very affected in both their work life and in their feelings about themselves by the behavior and activities of the principal. Case studies have been done which show how staff morale and energy can be destroyed by administrative actions (e.g. Miller & Wolf, 1979). Conversely, sensitive and creative administration has been shown to overcome severe problems and increase teacher effectiveness in dramatic ways (Ramsankar, 1992). My own previous experience in an inner city school with a nurturing administrator also bears witness to the importance of a work environment where teachers are enabled to do their best. But I do not believe that the responsibility for providing such an environment can or should be left to the school principal. Providing a caring, nurturing, and enabling environment for learning within today's society presents difficulties so large and so complicated that the responsibility should be thoughtfully shared by everyone inside and outside the education community.

The frustration and anguish voiced by other teachers both in the literature and in informal conversations suggest that my recent soul-battering experience as teacher/researcher may hold much in common with the current experiences of others. The problem, however, is still one of enhancing communication and deepening understanding. Just as death is understood more deeply by someone who is confronted with a terminal illness, the battering of the soul is something which may be difficult to understand unless one feels the impact on his or her own soul. Prior to my recent

experience I had heard many teachers complain about disabling working conditions and I had read much of the literature cited in this chapter, but I know now, that I did *not* understand how disabled a person can feel, and how disastrous the consequences could be, both for communication and for teaching itself. It frightens me that instead of returning to University, I might have been promoted to an administrative or policy-making position, and may have proposed initiatives which could have perilously affected the lives of teachers and the education of the children in their care. Now the problem remains: how to share these insights with other people inside and outside our education community in a way in which they may better understand the importance of providing the necessary conditions for teachers, students and their parents to communicate with one another and to work effectively together?

Conclusions

Interpretive inquiry does not seek to discover "truths", make generalisations, or form conclusions. Rather, the expected outcomes are the identification of ideas for helpful action (the fruitfulness or generativity of interpretation); the awareness of new questions or concerns; and/or a discovery or change in pre-understandings.

My inquiry resulted in my identification of several threads which wove together to form a picture of my life as a teacher/researcher. None of these threads were new discoveries. All had been the focus of many studies in the past. More surprising than the identification of the threads was the degree to which each of them were inter-related in their disabling effect on my efforts to carry out my responsibilities as a classroom teacher. Studied within the complicated circumstances of an elementary classroom and its connections with the education system and our larger society, each thread took on different colors, textures, and complexities.

I began this study with a practical concern: I saw the need for better communication and understanding among educators, students, and their parents. I believed that with shared caring as a natural bond at the grassroots level, communication could be improved and understandings deepened. The difficulties I experienced were astonishing to me; they were disabling, not by themselves, but in their accumulation and inter-relationships. Because teaching had been pleasant and rewarding for me in the past, I had never before understood what it could be like under some circumstances.

Like most people, I had been influenced by the structures created by our modern society. Living and working in the technical-rational time frame common to most of our institutions, I had assumed that individuals had the power to manage, manipulate, and organize their own time. I thought that the inability to "manage" time

caused inefficiencies which could only be blamed on the individual. I believed that a "competent" teachers should be able to manage their time well. Finding myself unable to meet my own standards was shocking to me. Analysing my experience opened my eyes and heart to alternate ways of viewing time and of living and working in our modern world. I will certainly be more sympathetic to co-workers who have difficulty "managing" time.

I had been comfortable with changes in teaching methodologies arising from recent shifts in understandings about learning and thinking. With a good understanding of the research and literature supporting the "whole language" approach, and several years of both learning and teaching in this way, I had eagerly embraced the idea of abandoning textbooks for language arts. I had a good knowledge of children's literature, and I enjoyed selecting my own materials. I also enjoyed writing, and I found it rewarding to create environments in which my students could become enthusiastic writers too. But suddenly, finding it necessary to plan and select materials for all subjects - even those subjects in which I did not have a strong background - I realized how some teachers must have felt when some school boards insisted that they "change" to new methodologies without the support of familiar materials. Analysing my experience made me more aware of the complex circumstances underlying decisions regarding the use of textbooks, and how these decisions can be intensely problematic within the complex circumstances of the classroom. I had been unaware of how useful textbooks could be in aiding the process of communication with parents. Certainly, I will look more carefully at what happens when sound research and good ideas evolve into policies which are not necessarily feasible or practical in a real-life situation.

Prior to this experience as a teacher/researcher, I had known about the vast array of "expectations" which are demanded of teachers by parents and by different groups of administrators. I had also known that some of these expectations were unrealistic and that some of them conflicted with one another. What I had not known,

until this teaching experience, was how time-consuming and frustrating it could be for a teacher to be "required" to constantly "justify" what he/she is doing. The demands for justification and accountability felt insulting; they also consumed time which would have been better spent in other ways. Analysing my experience, I began to understand the links between "expectations", "accountability", and "justification" with battles for power in our larger society. I also began to understand that in the complexities of a classroom situation, these battles became even more complicated, intense, and ultimately disabling.

Operating within the way our society constructs its understandings of "stress" or "burn-out", I had believed that the "symptoms" associated with stress or burn out are a sign of weakness. I saw myself as a stable person with strong personal resources. When, to my surprise, I began to experience these "symptoms" myself, I would have remained silent if I had been dependent on keeping my teaching position. Only because I resigned did I feel able to tell my story. This was because prior to my resignation, telling my story would have been damaging to my career; also, making sense of it would have required far more time and energy than I had. My experience, and my analysis of it, has made me understand how guilt, fear, and a harried work environment can hide the problems which can disable teachers.

Some threads in my "weaving" were significant in their absence. One of these was the importance of spirit in education. This thread was evident at the beginning, but lost by the end. Its eventual absence had a profound effect on my ability to teach and to create relationships with my students and their parents. Even more disturbing was the lack of threads for the children. Under the heavy weight of so many other problems, the children were almost always lost from view. This has made me glad I do not currently have small children going to school. I would not want them to have teachers who might be burdened with so many demands and problems that they lose sight of the children in their care. Certainly, I would not want them to have teachers

who might have to leave their battered spirits at home.

My experience, and the analysis of it, have made me re-think many of my own preconceptions about how better communication and understanding might be attained. I had believed that parents and the public could be "won over" at the grassroots level. I no longer believe this is so. Under circumstances where institutions are suffering such severe criticism from the public and from the media, classroom teachers (with all their own responsibilities and duties) do not have the extra time or energy needed to effectively present or argue the "justifications" for their program decisions, particularly when they do not have the aid of basic, professionally-designed classroom materials as a means of communicating the scope and sequence of their programs. Having to justify unpopular policy decisions to parents, who are influenced and frightened by media hype, is a task too large for a teacher engaged in full-time classroom teaching.

I had believed that the flow of communication should go both ways - that teachers should learn about the child "in his/her socio-cultural context" and use this knowledge in their curriculum decision-making. Analysing my own experience, I have seen that it is often not feasible to use this knowledge in curriculum decision-making, because many decisions involving curriculum have already been made at various levels of administrative hierarchy. Furthermore, some parents are more vocal than others in making their demands felt; and meeting their demands affects the other children in the class. It is indeed impossible to design a program which meets the needs, interests, and demands of everyone at the same time.

I have seen that programs such as the continuous learning policy and the transitional curriculum, which depend on such a flow of communication, can be so difficult to implement that, in practice, such programs may look quite different from the theoretical model on which they are built. In communicating with others, actions do speak louder than words (as the old saying goes), so what parents and the public are

seeing and complaining about may be quite different from the theory which educators support. This was a great problem in communication in my own classroom; I could explain educational theory to the parents of my students, but I knew that what they see could be quite different from what I was describing.

This leads to questions about how teachers may be enabled, rather than disabled, from putting educational theory into practice. There is a large body of literature which supports the idea of administrators as facilitators. Such administrators would find ways to help enable teachers to put theory into practice, rather than imposing more demands on them. Certainly, in my own experience, I have known and worked with principals who took this kind of role. Unfortunately, principals now have increasing demands placed on them also. They are accountable to all the parents of all the students in their schools as well as to the public and to their superiors in the hierarchical educational system. Principals, too, could be disabled by the problems and demands which disable their teachers.

The importance of enabling teachers is also discussed in a large study which was recently undertaken as a joint project of the Alberta School Employee Plan and the University of Alberta (Jevne & Zingle, 1993). Combining the use of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in their study, Jevne and Zingle point out that administrative philosophies and practices in schools and systems have a substantial influence on the teacher's experience, and that supportive, constructive, caring attitudes toward teachers are cost effective in terms of human and financial resources. They also note a relationship of change to conditions contributing to teacher "stress", "burn-out" and "long-term disability". In their concluding chapter, Jevne and Zingle write: "The timing of the implementation of Alberta Education initiatives is not consistent with available resources, system planning and teacher preparation. Ineffective implementation of change contributes to the insidious onset of health disabling conditions by furthering the experience of feeling less valued and less

capable" (p. 244).

I have come to realize, also, that a person can best be caring if he/she feels cared for and trusted. Looking back on my own years of teaching, I believe I was best able to care for my students, when I felt that I was respected, appreciated, and cared for by my administrators, my colleagues, and the parents of my students. The lack of trust and caring which I felt in my most recent experience created a sense of guardedness and fear which was paralysing. My analysis led me to realize that in our society, trust must be earned again and again - something which can be very difficult for a classroom teacher, singlehandedly, to do.

The problems in attaining better communication and reaching deeper understandings at the classroom level are not easily solved because they are entwined with other problems which are often hidden from view. At the University level, using this topic for my dissertation, I encountered again many of the same threads which had darkened my narrative account. There was the problem of meeting expectations; although people in the academic community saw the potential for fruitfulness or generativity of my study, and heartily supported my work, they worried so much that academic "requirements" may not be met, that conversations were sometimes diverted from the questions at the heart of my study. At times, I even felt a fearfulness or lack of trust. There was a fear that my analysis may not be "persuasive" enough - that people would assume that I was a teacher who was "unable to change and making a big deal out of it." There was a fear that I may not have demonstrated enough "theoretical knowledge" to "prove" that problems did not arise from my own lack of understanding. Again, it seemed that trust had to be earned. Just as a University degree, four years of graduate school and thirteen years of successful teaching experience were not enough to assume the trust of administrators and parents in my school system, these qualifications were not enough to assume trust in the academic community. Just as I was required, in the school system, to "justify what I was doing", I would be required,

in the academic community, to "defend" my thesis. Clearly, trust is not evident when words like "defence" are still used.

I had seen how the requirement for "justification" had been stifling in my classroom. It consumed time, inhibited my desire to take risks, and distracted me from my mission. Ultimately, it was disabling and contributed to my loss of spirit. Similarly, in the academic community, the need for "defence" can be time consuming, inhibiting, and distracting. It too can contribute to loss of spirit. Certainly, there are many graduate students who lose interest in the topic of their doctoral research after struggling for so long to defend it. There are students who are frightened away from selecting topics and using methodologies which are difficult to defend; and there are students who do not have time to think and reflect upon the questions and concerns which initiated their study - because they are so busy trying to find ways to defend or explain their methodologies!

Interpretive inquiry is not a methodology; it is both a process and an attitude toward learning and thinking which researchers engage to focus on questions and concerns which arise from real-life situations in order to find more fruitful ways to make sense of these situations and to communicate to others in ways which generate new insights, understandings, and questions. Interpretive inquiry is, however, built on strong philosophical foundations; and many researchers and theorists have articulated its characteristics over the years. I am therefore including a chapter on interpretive inquiry to provide some background about this approach to research.

The need to "defend" my methodology is not the only problem which interferes with communication and understanding as I write this dissertation. Interpretive inquiry depends on the "persuasiveness" of the writing. Often the writing is supported or clarified by illustrative material. In selecting illustrative material, fidelity to co-workers and others must be considered. Too little illustrative material can result in loss of communication, as the reader is unable to understand the story in the context in

which it occurred. This is especially important in a study like this one, where threads are inter-related and bound together. To look at one strand in isolation distorts the story. (Pursuing the metaphor of the weaving to clarify this point, imagine holding up one red and one green thread wound tightly together. What you will see will be quite different from what you would see if you looked at the two threads separately.) After re-writing my analysis many times - trying out different selections of illustrative material - I concluded that only by showing the whole picture (where threads are inter-woven and sometimes hidden) can my story be effectively communicated. However, the problem of fidelity was still deeply troubling. Only by ensuring the anonymity of the people, school, and school system involved can this problem be overcome. Since, as teacher/researcher, I am one of the characters in the story, anonymity could not be absolutely assured. Therefore, my story had to be omitted. The need to ensure anonymity continued to make communication difficult at various stages of producing this thesis. This is a problem which should be addressed as the academic community embraces more and more studies which contain personal stories.

The difficulties connected with the dual role of teacher/researcher also need to be considered. My experience has made it evident that it is sometimes not feasible for a teacher to undertake all of his/her teaching duties while engaging in the thought and reflection essential for the process of interpretive inquiry. It was only because I resigned that I was able to complete this study. On the other hand, I still believe that researchers sometimes need to experience real-life situations. If, as a researcher, I had taken the position of part-time participant or full-time observer, I would not have felt what it was like to be in a real-life situation. This would have been a great loss, because it was my feelings in a real-life situation that led to my most valuable insights. Perhaps what happened to me was the best situation after all: I experienced real-life circumstances, and then I was freed from those responsibilities while I worked on my analysis. Ideally, I could have been given a sabbatical leave for my

analysis, rather than having to resign. My experience as researcher/teacher certainly underscores the need for teachers to be provided with sabbatical leaves if they are to be encouraged to undertake research in their classrooms.

I would like to conclude with a story about a great-aunt who had been commissioned to write a history of her community. When I complimented her on her efforts, she said: "what would have been *really* interesting would have been to tell what *really* happened." But to do so, could have ruined lives, damaged relationships, and destroyed a community. The task of interpretive inquiry is to approach a topic in such a way that communication can be undertaken while life goes on. I have come to realize that this is so difficult that I am not sure it can be accomplished. This is why attaining communication and understanding is such an illusive goal; trust must be built so that the stories can be told, but in the re-telling, trust can be jeopardised, and opportunities for further communication and understanding destroyed. Building communication and deeper understanding is not about filling more paper with more information, or about creating more forums for people to make their voices heard; rather, it is about being enabled to inform one another in a way which will not jeopardise trust, which will keep the conversation going, and which will allow life to go on. In facing this task, as part of writing this dissertation, I have begun to be more aware of what the process of improving communication and understanding may require. But the problem remains: how to communicate with others inside and outside of the educational community, in a way which enables the conversation to proceed.

METHODOLOGY

Interpretive Inquiry as a Research Process

This chapter will provide some background about interpretive inquiry as a research process. The first part will provide a general description and explanation of this process. The second will describe my own interpretative journey.

Description of Interpretive Inquiry

Interpretive inquiry as a form of research has been increasingly supported among educational researchers as a means of informing educational policy and practice (Haggerson & Bowman, 1992). This support is rooted in the recent general acceptance among educational researchers that: the ideal typical worlds of the academic disciplines are radically different from the idiosyncratic worlds inhabited by practitioners; the recommendations researchers make are at least as much a product of the a priori metaphors they employ as the data they collect; the methods and discourse rules employed to protect us against bias systematically bias us against focusing on and effectively communicating about the aesthetic and affective dimension of educational experience. These understandings have led to discussions of action research and personal practical knowledge; arguments that inquiry should be approached as a process of critique or a process of deliberation; efforts to intentionally blur the distinction between research and political activity and approach research as a process of praxis; and attempts to dramatically expand the ways we gather and the ways we represent knowledge (Donmoyer, 1993).

Interpretive inquiry is a mode of analysis which lends itself to paradigms which

are mythological/practical, evolutionary/transformational, or normative/critical. Examples of problem sources are praxis, new visions of reality, institutions or classes. The researcher may take the role of participant-observer, total participant, or critic/revisionist. Interpretive inquiry may draw from methods of inquiry such as metaphor, journal-writing, autobiography, hermeneutics, and critical analysis (Haggerson & Bowman, 1992).

Interpretive Inquiry Following Hermeneutic Principles

Description of Process

In a presentation on hermeneutic principles for Interpretive inquiry (based on Smith, 1991 and Packer & Addison, 1989), Ellis (1994) explained that interpretive inquiry begins with a question, a practical concern, a confusion or caring. It proceeds with the researcher taking some action to get closer to what he/she hopes to understand by working toward a fusion of horizons. This leads to findings, some of which the researcher might have expected, and some which are surprises and which can, in hermeneutic terms, be called uncoverings. At this point, the uncoverings can change the direction of the study because of the new questions or concerns prompted by the surprises. The researcher first uses existing preconceptions, preunderstandings, and prejudices to make sense of or interpret the data. This is called the forward projective arc of the hermeneutic circle. Next, the researcher re-examines the data and interpretation, looking for confirmation, contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps and tries out other conceptual frameworks for their comprehensiveness, persuasiveness, plausibility, and coherence. This is called the backward evaluative arc of the hermeneutic circle.

These are, of course, only guidelines for how interpretive inquiry might be done. We need to remember that Gadamer (1952/1989), one of the theorists

frequently associated with interpretive inquiry, suggests that it is not possible to establish a correct "method" for inquiry independently of what a person is inquiring into, because what is being investigated holds part of the answer concerning how it should be investigated. This is where thinking and creativity play an important part in the interpretive inquirer's work.

Language plays an important role in hermeneutics. Rorty (1982) has illucidated how people who solved the problems of their communities in their times did so by transcending existing vocabularies in order to solve current problems and frame new, more useful ones. Rorty also identified the projects of human beings as: (1) to be engaged in their own growth, and (2) to contribute to solving the problems of their communities.

Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes of hermeneutic inquiry are the identification of ideas for helpful action (sometimes referred to as the fruitfulness or generativity of interpretive research); the awareness of new questions or concerns; and/or a discovery of change in pre-understandings.

Interpretive inquiry is useful for the purposes it embraces. Readers are persuaded by the coherence, insights, or instrumental utility of the case. No statistical test of significance is used to determine if results "count"; in the end, what counts is a matter of judgment (Packer & Addison, 1989).

Writing about qualitative research generally, Alan Peshkin (1993) identifies four kinds of broad outcomes: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation. He suggests that through description, there is the hope that one's case will touch others, not because one has discovered some universal condition of consciousness, but because there is some connection or resonance. Through interpretation, there are opportunities for the creation of new concepts, the elaboration of existing concepts, the provision of

insights, the clarification of complexity and the development of theory. Peshkin uses the term, "verification," (not to be confused with procedures undertaken by quantitative researchers to test the validity of claims) to explain how qualitative researchers engage in verifying assumptions and theories when they report their findings. He explains that evaluation, in qualitative research, has to do with considering the study's impact or possible influence on policies, practices and innovations. In outlining these possible outcomes, Peshkin encourages us to respect - not defend - the integrity of the qualitative paradigm, pointing out that this respect derives not from taking as one's starting point the issues and premises as defined by nonqualitative proponents, but rather, from taking the focus of inquiry as a starting point and asking: What is its generative promise? What we are looking for could be called a catalytic element - where we examine the degree to which the research reorients, focuses, and energises participants toward new understandings which may have a transformational effect.

Smith (1991) suggests that characteristic of hermeneutic inquiry is the degree to which it is guided by an interest in the question which is being explored. He writes: "Hermeneutics is not concerned with itself . . . far more important is its overall interest which is the question of human meaning" (p. 200). Hermeneutics, he continues, is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it. This distinguishes hermeneutics from other forms of research such as ethnographic research or grounded theory formulations where the objective may be to provide an account of people's thoughts and actions from their own point of view (Dobbert, 1982, cited in Smith, 1991). Hermeneutics recognises that meaning must be made as both the writer and the reader attempt to interpret to each other's understandings within the frame of their common language and experience. As Smith explains, the purpose of hermeneutic inquiry is not to avoid subjectivity but to use it responsibly in order to deepen our collective understandings. The outcome, then, should be the generation of "new ways of

seeing and thinking . . . bringing about new forms of engagement and dialogue about the world we face together" (p. 202).

Philosophical Underpinnings

Although human beings have been undertaking what we now call interpretive inquiry for hundreds of years, some of the philosophical underpinnings for the use of this approach for research in education may be explained with reference to the work of social phenomenologists such as Alfred Schutz (1967). Schutz was concerned about "knowing" in the social sciences; and wrote about intersubjective existence in a shared world. Social scientific inquirers, he said, should consider "*verstehen,*" a word he used to describe a particular kind of knowing process by which people in everyday life interpret the meanings of their own actions and those of others with whom they interact. Studying social reality, he suggested, means taking into account the subjective meanings of the actions of human beings from which social reality originates. This idea has been more recently referred to as "constructed reality", as human beings shape and reshape their experiences with the aid of schemata made available by predecessors and contemporaries (Schutz, 1967, p. 15, cited in Greene, 1994). It is an idea which leads to a conception of "multiple realities", a conception which can enable educational researchers to recognise that meaning constructed by one person may be different from meaning constructed by someone else (or indeed, by the person herself/himself, at a different time and under different circumstances). Schutz's ideas have also been associated with the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the view that knowledge is the result of human activity, that it is made in relation to others, not simply disclosed to the mind's eye.

Hermeneutic inquiry shares with phenomenological inquiry its emphasis on the vantage point and perspective. This idea can be explored with reference to the work of such existential-phenomenologists as Merleau-Ponty (1964), who wrote about what

he called the "primacy of perception", the idea that a human being is an embodied consciousness, contextualized, and situated in a landscape. It is an idea which refutes the philosophical view that mind and body, subject and object, are separated, and leads to the conception that knowing begins in a perceived landscape, in which perception emerges out of our relations to situations and environments. This idea has appeared in the writing of Eisner (1991) with reference to educational research. When we take the view that mind and matter transact, and that our experience of the world is a function not only of its features but what we bring to them, we find ourselves in a constructivist and an interpretive position.

Rooted in approaches to thinking in Ancient Greece, hermeneutics enables us to look at what understanding and interpretation are. It was an approach used by Husserl and others during the Romantic movement in challenging the idea that life could be brought under control by the correct logical procedures, an idea which had become so widespread with the newly emergent emphasis on science which characterised the Enlightenment. Schleirmacher (1819/1978), focusing on biblical and classical texts, showed how interpretation and understanding are creative acts, not technical functions. He pointed to the need for interplay back and forth from the specific to the general, from the micro to the macro, emphasizing the need for a creative spirit in the interpretation and an appreciation of the critical role of language in understanding. These ideas were incorporated into the writing of Heidegger (1927/62) and pursued by Gadamer (1952/89), whose works have been so influential in bringing hermeneutic approaches to the attention of current educational researchers. Among his many other contributions to our understanding of hermeneutics, Gadamer developed the idea that prejudgments and prejudices have a necessary and positive role in interpretation and have much to do with the circumstances in which interpretation can be undertaken. The pursuit of understanding, according to Gadamer, must go beyond what can be accomplished with the scientific method.

Rorty (1979), too, reminds us that researchers should involve themselves more consciously and reflectively in redescription and reinterpretation. Like other postmodernists who support the use of interpretive forms of inquiry, he emphasizes that there can be no single monological description of physical or human phenomena. This idea enables educational researchers to "question technical and specialized authorities, and to engage with intensified awareness in acts of becoming different, acts of redescribing and defining ourselves and our contacts with the world" (Greene, 1994, p. 440).

Interpretive inquiry, in questioning the objectivism which dominated the social sciences and educational research for so many years, opens the way to looking at particular educational situations from different points of view, and engaging in discourse through which new understandings may be constructed.

Characteristics of Interpretive Inquiry

Smith (1991) discusses key ideas in interpretive inquiry following hermeneutic traditions: the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding, the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation, and the overall interest in the question of human meaning and how we might make sense of our lives.

Interpretive inquiry shares the qualities of qualitative studies which tend to be field focused, are non-manipulative (naturalistic), use self as an instrument that engages in the situation and makes sense of it, positively exploits our own subjectivity, uses expressive language and the presence of voice in text, and pays attention to particulars.

Relationship to Narrative as a Research Tool

As I explained in my introduction to this dissertation, the focus for this

interpretive inquiry is what I have come to call "my narrative account". It is a narrative account of my experiences in a classroom over a three-month period. Because this narrative account has been so central to my inquiry, I am devoting a section of this chapter to the relationship of interpretive inquiry to narrative as a research tool.

When narrative is seen as a research tool, it becomes a method of organizing perception, thought, memory and action (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986). Central to the organization of knowledge and the processes of comprehension and thinking, narrative structures provide a format into which experienced events can be made comprehensible, memorable, and shareable (Carter, 1993).

In recent years, there has been a great deal of attention to narrative in intellectual circles. Bruner (1985) refers to a narrative mode of thought; Sarbin (1986) uses narrative as a root metaphor for the study of human conduct. Educational researchers Clandinin and Connelly (1992), Elbaz (1991), and Grossman (1987) make story a central element in analyses of teachers' practical knowledge.

Carr (1986) draws from the hermeneutic traditions of Heidegger and Husserl in presenting narrative structure as the organizing principle for our lives. He explains how, in living a life we are at once spectators of, agents in, and tellers of a story. Narrative, then, provides coherence to experiences which would otherwise disintegrate into mere sequence, formlessness, and chaos (Carr, 1986, cited in Ellis, 1994). As Sarbin (1986) suggests, narrative unity is an effective root metaphor for seeking to understand our own actions and observations and the actions and observations of others. In this study, reconstructing my experiences in the form of narrative rendered them interpretable.

For ethical reasons, I have not included my narrative account in this dissertation; rather, I chose to include excerpts in my interpretive analysis. This was problematic, because, as Mishler (1986) points out, meaning is distorted when stories

are decontexualized. The conflict between our desire to maintain fidelity to those with whom we live and our need to share our understandings with others is a tension inherent in the hermeneutic search for ways to communicate in such a way that life may proceed (Smith, 1992). This tension is central, also, to my own quest to better understand the difficulties involved in improving communication and deepening understanding among all those concerned about education. The use of narrative may be part of the solution, but as I have seen in my study, it also becomes part of the problem.

Selection of Form

In interpretive inquiry, the writing usually takes the form of a well argued essay (Packer & Addison, 1989, Chapter 1). Illustrative material is often provided to make points or support interpretations so that others with different pre-understandings can form their own interpretations. However, experimental formats might make it more possible for some people's medium and message to be more compatible (Eisner, 1991). Generally, the form selected would depend on three considerations: inquiry purposes, audience, and the researcher's imagined relation to them. Therefore, the form could be descriptive, expositional, argumentative or narrative; we are in an experimental moment (Marcus & Fiecher, 1986).

What Interpretive Inquiry Can Enable Researchers to Do

Gadamer (1927/89) has suggested that we base our inquiry on a deeper idea of application: things become a living part of what we do. We get our prejudices to speak to one another through the journey of exploration. We develop the ability to see what is questionable. Happenstance is considered important; it is actually at the centerpiece of interpretive work.

The task of Hermes, the Greek messenger god upon whom hermeneutics was named, was the task of passage. His mission was to find a way to open the topic in such a

way that it could be entered. Hermeneutics becomes an interweaving of signs, a weaving of a text, through which understandings appear through the telling (Jardine, 1992).

Maxine Greene (1994) speaks of interpretive inquiry as a means of enabling us to break through the oversimplified or statistical or technicist frames when it is appropriate to do so and "to grasp what it signifies to be a teenage single mother without a place to send her children for day care so she can go to school . . . to grasp how it is for a Dominican child trying to learn English in a hallway while dreaming of the beaches at home" (p. 456). It can also become a means of enabling educational researchers to grasp what it means to be a teacher in a classroom situation, responsible for developing curriculum for a class full of young children, and at the same time, being forced to interpret, implement, and defend policies which sometimes are in conflict with his/her own views of education and often in conflict with the many different people to whom he/she is accountable.

An explanation of my own interpretive journey will follow in the next section.

My Own Interpretive Journey

Driven by my concern about communication and understanding among teachers, students, and their parents, I proceeded to immerse myself in a situation where I could get closer to the lived experience of a teacher in an elementary classroom. I took the role of teacher/researcher, or researcher/teacher, so that I would be able to appreciate the teaching experience and efforts at communication from the teacher's point of view. Because I planned to analyse my experiences, I kept a written account of the things that happened each day - an expression of my own experiences in the context of the classroom situation. Even when I was experiencing difficulty in my teaching life, I proceeded with the daily writing, partly because I believed it would be important to my study, and partly because I enjoy writing so this was a pleasure to do. Each day I typed one to two pages of material into my computer. This evolved into a part of my narrative account.

My narrative account, a reconstruction of these daily entries, filled over a hundred typewritten pages. It included the daily entries, plus reflections on each entry which I added after re-reading all the written material during the month after my teaching position ended. The reflective material served to tie the daily entries together, pointing to insights which had become apparent to me after re-reading all the material several times.

Six months later, I re-read the entire account again. From this perspective (having distanced myself in time from both the real-life experience and my reflections on it), I produced another reconstruction of the narrative account, this time using the metaphor of a weaving to look at how the threads or themes were connected together. I then engaged in a process of searching various conceptual frames for the most adequate

interpretation. I then proceeded to see how each thread may be linked with conditions and perspectives in the larger world by reading related research and literature, and by writing about its relationship to the experiences I had.

By identifying and following the courses of threads woven together, I was able to discern the unfolding of themes and situations not in isolation but in relation to one another. I could see how conditions, problems, and events were linked together, and how they sometimes accumulated to create a denseness which concealed other (often more important) problems. For example, frustration and guilt often hid disabling working conditions which were later revealed in my examination of my account. In this way, I have been able to analyse my experiences as a classroom teacher, linking conditions in my particular situation with conditions in the larger world.

During my three months as a researcher/teacher, I experienced many surprising situations which forced me to re-think some of my prior conceptions of the possibilities of communication and deeper understandings among teachers, students, and parents, as well as some of my prior conceptions of teaching itself. Later, re-reading the entries and looking at them as parts of the whole experience enabled me to see how situations, events, concerns and problems seemed to be linked or related to one another. Re-reading all the entries and the reflections six months later, I was able to take a more distant view in selecting threads or themes for their most generative power.

During each part of the process, new uncoverings were found. Some threads, themes or conditions which seemed to be minor concerns by themselves, were shown to have an overpowering effect on the whole picture simply because of their accumulation or repetition. One thread, the one which represented the teacher's spirit, was so concealed at times that it was almost forgotten. Other threads (for example, the ones which would have represented the children) were significant because of their absence from the picture and because of the holes that they left.

Taking some of the threads and holding them up to the light, many new surprises

and possibilities for insights were discovered. New questions arose as links were found between conditions in the larger world and concerns which had been uncovered in the analysis of my narrative account. The last chapter of my analysis returned to the original question about communication and understanding, and in so doing, uncovered difficulties in communication and understanding among the academic community which were startlingly similar to many of the difficulties which had been found in the classroom situation.

This inquiry, therefore, became a vehicle through which themes and situations connected with communication and understanding could be uncovered within the context of both the teaching and the research situation. My experiences and the analysis of my experience have forced me to re-think some of my prior conceptions of the possibilities for communication and deeper understandings among teachers, students, parents and educators both in the field and in the academic community. In identifying larger problems, I at first wanted to call them "barriers" to communication and understanding, but later I rejected this term. A barrier may seem, to some, like something which can be picked up and taken away. My analysis suggests that these problems are too systemic and intertwined with the society in which we live to be so simply removed. But this does not mean that we can not deal with them, carefully, thoughtfully, and wisely - not as separate problems confined to our educational institutions but as problems intertwined in all our efforts to live and work together in some sort of harmony.

DISCUSSION

As a piece of research, my inquiry becomes part of the community conversation about schools, teaching, and teachers. In this section I will explore how what I have learned speaks to the bodies of literature or current conversations about teacher as researcher and teacher as curriculum developer.

Teacher as Researcher

When I began my study, I wanted to look at what it may be like for a teacher to try to achieve better communication and understandings with his/her students and their parents, and how these understandings may affect his/her curriculum decision-making. In the hope of enhancing communication and deepening understandings, I wanted to build trusting relationships; I wanted to "fuse horizons" with the people with whom I worked, and then I wanted to analyse this process so that difficulties, opportunities and learnings might be uncovered and discussed with others in the education community.

I believed it would be worthwhile to study my own efforts and process of bringing the hopes, fears, loves, beliefs, values, understandings, past experiences, aspirations and motivations of a teacher, her students, and their parents onto the table for honest discussion. I thought that others in the education community would share my belief in the value of this study. As I proceeded with my research experience and as a most improbable set of conditions led to what were perhaps predictable and yet devastating consequences, I believed that others in the education community would want to hear about the difficulties I had experienced. I thought they would want to help me understand how these difficulties had interfered with the process of communication at the school level and with my own ability to teach.

I believed that just as shared caring creates a natural bond between parents and

teachers, shared caring for children and their education must create a bond among people in the larger education community. After all, I thought, whether we work in a school, an administrative setting, or at a University, we all entered careers in education because we care about children and learning. I believed this bond would enable us in the larger education community to work together to interpret experiences like mine and to use our conversations as a means of raising questions and generating further discussion.

Unfortunately, the conversations did not always proceed as I had hoped. In the larger education community, I was sometimes surprised to find myself experiencing some of the same interferences to communication and understanding which I had experienced at the school level.

Some of the difficulties in communication and understanding which I experienced are rooted in problems associated with the idea of teachers as researchers. This chapter will first explain the idea of teacher as researcher as it has evolved over the years. It will then describe some different viewpoints associated with the idea of teacher as researcher, and how a focus on these differences can create conditions which disable our efforts to fuse horizons and stifle conversations about the things we most need to discuss. Further problems will then be discussed in light of my experience and new questions will be raised.

A Brief History

The idea of teacher as researcher is not a new one. In describing the history of research on teaching, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) trace the underlying conceptions of teacher as researcher to Dewey, pointing out that as early as 1904 he was emphasising the importance of teachers' reflecting on their practices and integrating their observations into their emerging theories of teaching and learning.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle write that Dewey's notion of teacher reflection "prefigures the concept of teachers as reflective practitioners more recently developed in the work of researchers who depict professional practice as an intellectual process of posing and exploring problems identified by the teachers themselves" (p. 4).

Even before Dewey wrote down his ideas about teaching, many people dedicated to passing down their skills, knowledge, or values (mothers, fathers, older siblings, grandparents, elders in the community) probably reflected on their practices and integrated their observations into their emerging theories of teaching and learning. Such people were, as Dewey (1904) suggested, "moved by their own ideas and intelligence" (p. 16). Conversations with my own elderly relatives (an aunt who taught in rural one-room schools in the 1930s and 1940s; an uncle who taught in a variety of situations for a total of forty-six years) bear witness to the notion that for many years, teachers have been thinking and conducting research in their own classrooms in the sense that they were continually making careful observations and using their professional judgments to make changes or adjustments to their teaching practice.

In the meantime, while good teachers were doing this sort of research or reflection within their classrooms as a natural part of living, learning, and teaching, more "scientific" research was being carried on outside of the classroom. This "scientific" research was being used more and more as a justification for decision making regarding educational policy and administration. As research conducted by "experts" from outside the classroom gained more and more prestige and power, insights resulting from everyday research or reflection became less respected.

Counteracting this trend to some degree, Corey (1953) recognised the importance of encouraging teachers to undertake research in their own classrooms to increase their own effectiveness with subsequent classes in similar situations, and was one of the early advocates of what has become known as action research. Later, Schaefer (1967) extended this idea, asserting that schools could be organized as

centers of inquiry, producing knowledge in the field of education. Around the same time, Schwab (1969) in a reaction against curricula produced by "experts" from outside the classroom, asserted the importance of "practical judgment" in curriculum matters, and to some extent, this prepared the ground for subsequent conceptions of teachers as researchers. Soon afterwards, Lawrence Stenhouse and his colleagues, who established the Center for Applied Research and Education at the University of East Anglia in 1970, were very influential in creating what came to be called the "teachers as researchers" movement. This movement had a major impact, particularly in Britain, as it became part of the "extended professionalism" of teachers being promoted as a response to increasingly centralised control of curriculum and assessment. Before long, teachers on several continents were being encouraged to participate in research projects. The aims of such projects were to improve school and classroom practice while at the same time, contributing to knowledge about teaching (Elliott, 1987).

The idea of teacher as researcher seemed to appeal to those who saw the need to better link theory with practice and to demystify and democratise the increasing influence of research by professionals outside of the teaching practice (Stenhouse, 1975). The "teacher as researcher" movement soon resulted in an explosion of studies and publications which have been added to our growing store of written material about teaching. Teacher research has been done as dissertations, graduate coursework projects, and in conjunction with duties as a cooperating teacher or student teacher. Some teacher-researchers have worked on collaborative research projects with university-based researchers or teacher educators. Others have formed research partnerships with colleagues. Widespread and highly publicised activities (e.g. children's development as writers; cooperative learning) have resulted in huge numbers of studies on related subjects.

A number of organizations have recently begun to focus their efforts on teacher research. In the United States, both the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) have begun to sponsor national efforts to support teacher research through direct funding. Our Canadian provincial and sometimes federal governments have also supported teacher research but usually on a request basis; that is, the questions for study are initiated by the government, usually in response to requests or concerns expressed by the public or articulated in the media. At the school district level, both formal and informal research activities by teachers are encouraged. Usually these teachers are undertaking research as part of a university course or project, and the research is undertaken as a cooperative venture between the university and the school.

During the past ten years, reflection has frequently become associated with the idea of teachers as researchers. Susan Adler (1991), in a review of numerous examples of recent literature on the subject of reflective practice, helps to clarify some differences in the way reflection has been viewed. She divides the literature into three major groups. Cruikshank's (1987) reflective teaching was mainly designed to enable pre-service teachers to replicate teaching behaviours found to be effective through previous research. Schon's (1983, 1987) "reflection in action" has to do with reconstructing the knowledge of practice which has been developed through experience. In the works of Zeichner (e.g. Zeichner, 1981; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) this idea is expanded to include three levels of reflection. At the lowest or technical level, the focus is on applying professional knowledge for given ends. An example is when teachers and pre-service teachers reflect upon the effectiveness of their teaching to determine whether a given set of objectives have been achieved. At the second level, reflection includes a scrutiny of competing educational goals and a thoughtful examination of teaching within its situational and institutional contexts. At the third or highest level, moral and ethical issues are also considered. At this level there is a transformational intent, an idea associated with the "critical reflection" of theorists such as Smyth (1989) and Giroux (1988). Examples include questioning what may

have been taken for granted, looking for unarticulated assumptions, seeing situations from new perspectives, and looking for ethical and political possiblities beyond the immediate situation. Van Manen (1977), who has also explored the idea of three levels of reflection, shows how different levels of reflectivity can be associated with corresponding interpretations of ways of being practical. On the lowest level, the practical is concerned mainly with means rather than ends, the technical application of educational knowledge and principles for the purpose of attaining a given objective. At a higher level, the practical is concerned with analysing and clarifying individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments and presuppositions for the purpose of making choices among practical possibilities. At the highest level, the practical assumes the classical politico-ethical meaning of social wisdom in order to deliberate the worth of educational goals and experiences. Van Manen (1977) writes:

> At (the highest) level, the practical addresses itself, reflectively, to the question of the worth of knowledge and to the nature of the social conditions necessary for raising the question of worthwhileness in the first place. The practical involves a constant critique of domination, of institutions, and of repressive forms of authority (p. 227).

Also associated in recent years with the idea of teachers as researchers has been the use of story as a central focus for inquiry. In the past several years, there has been a great wave of interest in using the literature on "story" or "narrative" to define both the method and the object of inquiry in education. Clandinin and Connelly (1992), Elbaz (1991), Grossman (1987) and others have made story a central element in their study of teachers' knowledge. The use of story, narrative inquiry, and autobiography have all been extremely fruitful as forms of inquiry, providing what Richard Butt (1992) calls a fertile ground for action research, enabling researchers to explore the meaning of experience. In a recent examination of the place of story in the study of teaching, Carter (1993) writes: "I am convinced that the analysis of story

is of central importance in the field of education as a framework for reorienting our conventional analytic practices . . . . as we have seen, it has given rise to many exciting projects of interest to a broad range of our community" (p. 11). In a world view which sees contextualism as central to the human condition, the story becomes a fruitful metaphor for examining and interpreting human action because the root metaphor of contextualism is the historical act, a metaphor that corresponds to the description of the narrative (Sarbin, 1986). In reflecting on experience, human beings construct stories which are attempts to make sense of their experiences. The story is therefore inherent in the heuristic process of attempting to explain and understand experience. As well as providing us with a cognitive instrument for understanding everyday life, the narrative schema enables us to identify categories of information and to specify important relationships among those categories. It also enables us to perceive order and to recognize repetition and similarity between the contextualized account and the universal situation, becoming a natural mediator between the particular and the general of human experience (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986).

> "Narrative thinking - storying - is a successful method of organizing perception, thought, memory, and action. It is not the only succeessful method, but within its natural domain of everyday interpersonal experience it is more effective than any other" (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986, p. 123).

Having emerged in many forms, the idea of teacher as researcher currently rests among many old and new practices and traditions in the study of education. But do all these projects mean that the larger educational community is now seriously discussing what teacher/researchers have to say about children, learning, and teaching? Or are there still too many difficulties for the conversation to proceed? The next section will explain how conditions, conceptions and attitudes can still interfere

with the serious involvement of teacher/researchers in educational discourse.

Arising Problems

The teacher as researcher movement remains problematic in a number of ways which can make it difficult for teacher/researchers to be seriously involved in educational discourse. This section will describe these problems in light of my own experience and explain how such problems can interfere with our community conversations about schools, teaching, and teachers.

Conceptions of Research

I believe that human beings can learn from one another in many different ways and, therefore, one form of research should not hold greater status or favour than another. As Elliot Eisner points out in his paper on the primacy of experience and the politics of method (1988), the selection of forms of research should be rooted in the experience and the questions arising from that experience. Conducting research in my own classroom, I felt confident that insights uncovered from my experience and the analysis of my experience would be both illuminating and useful to a wide range of people interested in education: practising teachers, administrators, members of the academic community, and the general public which supports our education system. Yet, when I returned to the University to discuss my study plans with my colleagues at a public presentation, I was confronted with the question:

"But is this research?"

I had hoped to involve others in the academic community in a fruitful discussion so that my analysis might be enriched by the perspectives of others. But the speaker continued:

"I don't believe it is (research)."

And so, the discussion centered upon what can qualify for research at the University level. The conversation became guarded. Tension settled over the group as members saw the need to defend their own perspectives about what constitutes research. In the end, there was no time or taste for talking about the questions which were arising from my teaching experience.

People who still equate research with the process-product approach often feel uncomfortable in the absence of generalizable conclusions or measurable results. Yet such expectations can seldom be met in the highly complex, context-specific, interactive reality of the classroom. Although teacher-generated research can provide extremely useful insights both for practising teachers and the larger educational community, research undertaken by teachers has been often denied the attention of administrators and others in policy-influencing positions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990).

How can the work of teacher-researchers be legitimated? There are several examples in the current literature which represent different ideas about what teacher research should be. Possibilities include an approximation of university-based research; a grass-roots phenomenon that has its own internal standards of logic, consistency, and clarity; or a reflective process for the benefit of the individual. Myers (1985) argues for the adaptation of basic and applied social science research paradigms to teacher research, insisting that teachers be well grounded in problem definition, research design, and quantitative data analysis. He suggests that teachers begin by replicating the studies of university-based researchers. Mohr and MacLean (1987) write that teacher research is a new genre not necessarily bound by the constraints of traditional research paradigms. In their view, teachers should identify their own questions, document their observations, analyze and interpret data in light of their current theories, and share their results primarily with other teachers.

Barthoff (1987) suggests that teachers already have all the information they need and what they should be encouraged to do is to re-examine, or RE-search their own experiences. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) assert that although each of these views are quite different, each implicitly compares teachers' research to university-based research on teaching, and therefore acts as a barrier to enhancing our knowledge about teaching.

> Regarding teacher research as a mere imitation of university research is not useful and ultimately condescending. It is more useful to consider teacher research as its own genre, not entirely different from other types of systematic inquiry into teaching, yet with some quite distinctive features . . . but it is also important to recognise the value of teacher research for both the school-based teaching community and the university-based research community. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p.4)

Because of divisive views of what research should be, we constrain our understandings, we "limit what we seek" (Eisner, 1988, p. 15), and we restrict our ability to communicate our insights and ideas with one another. The most destructive result of the assertion that my study was not research was that discussion then centered around the disputes about what can be called research, rather than on ideas or questions which may have been helpful in analysing and understanding my experience. These conditions inhibited communication and prevented the possibility of fruitful discussion.

Theoretical Frameworks

Arguments in defence of legitimising teacher research are often a response to assertions that research must rest on theory. This leads to the debate about whether teachers' knowledge can qualify as theory. Argyris (1982) refers to "theories in

action", the idea that teaching requires intentional and skillful action within real-world situations - actions which depend on the ability to perceive relevant features of complex, problematic, and changeable situations. Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) assert that such theories in action are essentially theoretical knowledge. Teaching itself, according to Duckworth (1986), can be seen as a form of research; and teachers can be significant participants in theoretical and pedagogical discussions on the nature and development of human learning. Kagan (1992) writes: "A growing body of literature suggests that the most seasoned and expert teachers build informal, highly personal theories from their own experiences" (p. 163). This vision of teaching as theory building has been elevated by writers such as Kincheloe (1991) who argue that "teachers possess a tacit knowledge which can be drawn upon to make sense of social and educational situations" (p. 30) and that this knowledge is theory.

A much different view is presented by such writers as North (1987), who assert that although practitioner knowledge is rich and powerful, it is totally unselective, self-contradictory, and framed only in practical terms, and thus, can not qualify as theory. Other writers assert that, although practitioner knowledge is not (in their view) theoretical knowledge, the various combinations of facts, values and assumptions which combine to form practitioner's knowledge, may better capture the state of knowledge in applied fields like education than so-called scientific theories (Zumwalt, 1982).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) suggest:

> If we regard teachers' theories as sets of interrelated conceptual frameworks grounded in practice, then teacher researchers are both users and generators of theory. If, however, we limit the notion of theory to more traditional university-based definitions, then research by teachers may be seen as atheoretical, and its value for creation of the knowledge base on teaching may be circumscribed." (p. 7)

Unfortunately, whether the contributions of teacher/researchers are seen as less important than university-based research (North, 1987), more useful than university-based research (Zumwalt, 1982), or vastly superior to university-based research (Kincheloe, 1991), such arguments can interfere with discussion about crucial problems in education because the debate about whether or not teacher research is atheoretical forces people to take opposing stances right from the beginning. The conversation can not proceed until one viewpoint "wins", and since this is often impossible, the discussion is stalled. This is what happened during the public presentation of my research proposal, and as a result, opportunities for a rich interchange of ideas were lost. Different viewpoints about the nature of research and relationship of research to theory forced members of the group into distinct and opposing "camps". Until one group "won" (an impossible goal), they could not go forth together to hear and discuss the questions which were arising from my real-life teaching situation.

I believe that this example is illustrative of difficulties central to communication and understanding. Just as differences in perspectives about schooling and curriculum orientations make it difficult and sometimes impossible for fruitful discussion at the school level (Jackson, 1992), differences in perspectives about research can make it difficult or impossible to take concerns and problems arising in the classroom into the larger educational community.

Seeing this as an important problem to overcome so that conversations about education can proceed, some educational theorists such as Carr (1987) have attempted to look at the two viewpoints about teacher research, and instead of forcing us to choose between them, they have helped us to see these views in relation to one another. To do so, they have tried to describe education in a way which recognises both the technical (the systemic, institutional and instrumental or means-end elements) and the practical

and moral character of teaching (as "praxis" in social situations of great complexity). Such a view (what Carr describes as the "strategic" view) recognises that all aspects of education may be regarded as problematic: its purpose, the social situation it models or suggests, the way it creates or constrains relationships among participants, the kind of medium in which it works, and the kind of knowledge to which it gives form. Each of these can be reflected upon and reconsidered to inform future decision-making, and each can be seen in a social and historical context. This critical self-reflection, Carr explains, uses communication as a means to develop a sense of comparative experience, to discover local or immediate constraints on action by understanding the contexts within which others work, and by converting experience into discourse. Taking a critical approach to educational theory and seeing action research as its concrete methodological expression, then, enables us to see the work of the teacher/researcher not as atheoretical but as a means to inform a critical theory of education.

Questions of Ownership and Content

Teacher research has the potential to address issues that teachers themselves identify as significant. However, in practice, teachers' concerns are not always recognised. Projects to receive support, encouragement and funding are those which address issues considered important by people in current positions of power. Although the teacher as researcher movement has been seen as a way to legitimise research at the classroom level so that theory could be better linked to practice, it has also been used as a tool to facilitate changes preconceived by those outside the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990).

It is interesting to note that Stenhouse's model was, in fact, initially conceived as a solution to problems faced by centrally funded developers of educational curricula and materials in the United Kingdom during the late 1960s and 1970s (Elliott, 1987). New curricula were being misused by teachers, so the dilemma was how to create

change in classrooms so that curriculum innovations could be more effectively implemented. The encouragement of teachers to take the role of researchers would appear to stem from a renewed respect for teacher's autonomy of judgment; however, as the teacher as researcher movement has filtered down through different school systems, teachers have been encouraged to do research as part of a process through which external agents could better affect their own preconceived changes. Recently, critical theorists such as Smyth (1992) have been suggesting that teachers as researchers should take their research process much further - linking their consciousness about the processes that inform the day-to-day aspects of their teaching with the wider political and social realities within which it occurs; otherwise, "there is a risk that the reflective practices which teachers hoped would be a means of emancipation, could actually entrap them within the New Right ideology of radical interventionism" (Smyth, 1992, p. 267).

But if teacher research or reflection is undertaken critically, as writers such as Smyth (1992) and Carr (1987) suggest, who will listen when teachers try to share insights which they have uncovered? Excluding potentially disruptive members from serious attention can be a means for sustaining current power structures and practice.

Documentation and Analysis

Both teacher researchers and university researchers are often confronted with demands for rigorous documentation. Since most teacher research is collected during the daily activities of teaching, there are obvious limitations placed on what teachers can manage to do (Elliott, 1987). This can immediately put teacher researchers at a disadvantage when their work is compared to the work of university researchers.

However, even if a teacher does manage to meet the demands for documentation, some university researchers question whether teachers' data can be sufficiently systematic and whether teacher researchers are sufficiently well prepared as

classroom observers. The teacher's work then may be treated condescendingly, even insultingly.

"Your data is *only* a personal journal," someone remarked to me, during my public presentation, even though this person had not yet seen my journal or heard it described. Few teachers would have the confidence to overcome such resistance to their efforts (Elliot, 1987).

Yet many teachers do have sophisticated and sensitive observation skills grounded in the context of actual classrooms and schools, and such interpretive frameworks "provide a truly emic view that is different from that of an outside observer, even if the observer assumes an ethnographic stance and spends considerable time in the classroom" (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990, p. 7). Examples of teacher research which offer a rich "inside view" of the classroom include "On listening to what children say" (Paley, 1986) and Jevon doesn't sit at the back anymore (White, 1990). Indeed, Kincheloe (1990) suggests that teacher researchers should view themselves as "potentially the most sophisticated research instruments available" (p. 30). Although these and other examples show that the educational discussion can be enhanced by including teacher research, opportunities to enter educational discourse are frequently denied teacher researchers (Elliott, 1987).

Part of the problem may be because teachers sometimes do not share the language of university researchers. Carter (1993) refers to this problem as the issue of voice, centering on the extent to which the languages of research on teaching, with their emphasis on general propositions, allow for the authentic expression of teachers' experiences and concerns.

In making my public presentation and later, in writing my dissertation, I wanted to use the language of myself as teacher rather than myself as university researcher. I believed that in doing so, I would be able to better communicate the feelings which I experienced within my teaching situation. But here is the potential for

resistance as well, because the style of language which can communicate feelings is not often the style printed in the scholarly journals which become part of the process of educational discourse. Carter (1993) writes:

> This issue is also one of discourse and power, that is, the extent to which the languages of researchers not only deny teachers the right to speak for and about teaching but also form part of a larger network of power that functions for remote control of teaching practice by policymakers and administrators. (p. 8)

To be denied the use of my own voice or language during educational discourse is to be denied a serious hearing for my own experience as teacher/researcher, since the hermeneutic approach views human experience as essentially linguistic (Rorty, 1982, p. 13). Language is not simply a tool for expressing or communicating something non-linguistic, but rather, a part of the process of *bildung* or self-formation. We use language *together* in our efforts to help each other understand each other's experiences and feelings.

Further Problems Arising from my Own Experience

In the process of undertaking this study, I encountered several other problems which have made me re-think some of my preconceptions about what may be expected from teachers as researchers. I will describe how some of my preconceptions changed.

Previously, in the 1970s and 1980s, I had participated in several informal research projects. As I participated in these projects, I identified myself as a teacher/researcher. I found these projects intellectually satisfying and helpful in understanding and transforming my own teaching practices. My positive experiences with these projects led me initially to approach my current study with optimism and enthusiasm. I believed that any teacher could undertake research if he/she wished to do so. Now, after my most recent experience as a teacher/researcher, I realize that the

comfort level of my previous experiences had been dependent on conditions which are not common to all educational settings. Through the analysis of my experience, I began to understand how such conditions as a tense or hurried atmosphere can set severe limits on what a teacher is able to do. Such factors can not only restrict a teacher's ability to collect data; they can also restrict his/her ability to think about complex situations and to effectively communicate ideas. I also began to understand the stifling effects of other requirements and limitations arising from school or school system policy. The question now arises: when the larger educational community hears about research undertaken by teachers who work in a comfortable environment, does this lead to assumptions about what other teachers may be able to undertake while maintaining their teaching positions? Certainly, I would not have been able to sustain the thoughtful analysis of my narrative account if I had not resigned from my teaching position.

My experience has also helped me to understand how fear can interfere with a teacher/researcher's ability to communicate completely and honestly with the larger educational community. I found that I must conceal some of my observations which my colleagues perceived as "dangerous". If I had maintained my teaching position, it would have been unwise to raise some of the concerns which I raised in my analysis. This leads to the question: how can teacher/researchers honestly report their observations without jeopardising their own careers? This concern is one which is also discussed by Hollingsworth and Minarik (1991) in their article about the risks in closing the distance between public perspectives and the private realities of schooling.

Fear was not the only reason for concealing some of my observations. Prior to beginning my study, I had been deeply influenced by Nel Noddings' (1986) article on fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. In speaking about fidelity in teaching and research, Noddings explains how problems arise with special force in qualitative research on teaching.

"Researchers sometimes find themselves torn between honouring the relation of trust upon which their access was predicated, and their perceived responsibility to a clientele that supports, evaluates, and depends upon public education." (Noddings, 1986, p. 507)

Noddings describes how a Kantian interpretation of fidelity makes it our duty to tell the truth, no matter what the consequences (being sure, of course, that it is the truth); a utilitarian interpretation demands fidelity to the principle of optimising good outcomes over bad. Using an ethic of caring, however, reminds us that fidelity means faithfulness to persons and the expectations established in relation (Noddings, 1986, p. 508). When a teacher is undertaking research in her own classroom, he/she is immersed in the ecology of that classroom - and that ecology includes all of the people who move in and out of the classroom. The teacher/researcher is then confronted with a dilemma; to omit some people in presenting her observations results in an incomplete (even dishonest) picture, and this could interfere with his/her efforts to communicate and enhance understandings among the educational community. To include every one (even if she has legal permission to do so) could hurt or offend those with whom she has established trust. This dilemma is also described by Hollingsworth and Minarik (1991) as they provide an intimate look at the personal and professional risks teachers must take in researching their own experiences and reporting what they find.

Eleanor Duckworth (1986), who believes strongly that teachers as researchers can make important contributions to what we understand about teaching and learning, suggests another problem which can inhibit the kind of research a practising teacher is able to do.

"It is a rare school teacher who has the freedom or the time to think of her teaching as research since much of her autonomy has been withdrawn in favour of policies set by anonymous standard setters." (Duckworth, 1986, p. 494)

This raises the question: although many people may agree that research undertaken by teachers in their classrooms can provide a worthwhile contribution to educational discourse, is it realistic to encourage practising teachers to undertake such research without providing the necessary conditions for them to do so? Would the provision of such conditions create an artificial environment which could reduce the value of the research in helping us to understand and raise questions about a real teaching situation? Or should such conditions be considered a necessity, not only for undertaking research but for enabling teachers to teach? This is an idea which has also been raised recently by the Alberta Teachers' Association (1994) in their document, Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions.

This dissertation has been about finding ways to further our conversations about education by enabling each other to undertake research and communicate with each other about the observations and questions which are raised. This section has shown how conditions and attitudes both in a school and in a university environment can stifle rather than further such conversations. I will end with a hypothetical story:

Suppose my son comes home from school, flops down in a chair and moans, "I had a rotten day."

I wonder what would happen if I responded to him in this way: "I can not be sure you had a rotten day. We need a perception check. Perhaps two other people can provide me with their observations."

Of course the conversation would end. Although this example is ridiculous, the educational community sometimes responds in similar ways to students, teachers, parents and others who try to communicate with us. The conversation is stifled, and we all lose our opportunity to communicate and to deepen understandings. This is a problem which concerns teacher/researchers, and it concerns all of us who care about children and education.

Teacher as Curriculum Developer

Through my analysis of my recent experience as researcher/teacher, I became keenly (and sometimes painfully) aware of the multitude of difficulties involved in curriculum development and in discussions about curriculum development. These difficulties were often both the cause and the result of problems in communication and understanding. This chapter will first discuss the conception of teacher as curriculum developer under the headings: *Varying Definitions of Curriculum; The Role of the Teacher, Models of Curriculum Development,* and *Various Curriculum Orientations.* Next it will show how another view of teacher as curriculum developer led me to the edge of this particular study, and how my experiences, and my analysis of them then changed some of my preconceptions about what a teacher as curriculum developer might be expected to do. My discussion will include examples both from the literature and from my personal experience.

Varying Definitions of Curriculum

The Oxford English Dictionary defines curriculum as "a course; spec. a regular course of study or training as at a school or University." This is the definition which has been most frequently used in North America in everyday teaching practice and among laymen discussing education (Jackson, 1992). In my own province, in Canada, where written curriculum documents have traditionally been made available for every classroom, and textbook series have been often mandated, curriculum has also come to be associated either with the textbooks themselves or with the printed material which articulated the goals and objectives of a course of studies. However, these conceptions of curriculum have not been the same as those articulated and acted upon by curriculum specialists, administrators, policy-makers, and curriculum theorists at the university

level.

Curriculum theorists, for example, have traditionally broadened the concept of curriculum. In 1935, Caswell and Campbell were already writing that curriculum is *all* of the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers. Four decades later, Saylor and Alexander (1974) were still defining curriculum as encompassing *all* the learning opportunities provided by the school, and Olivia (1982) was defining it as a plan or program for *all* experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school. This broad view continues to be articulated by many policy makers. The position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children defines curriculum as "an organized framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur" (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists, 1990, p. 21).

Broadening the definition of curriculum greatly affects the way curriculum development is perceived and the way it can or should be undertaken. The next section will discuss how this affects the role of the teacher.

The Role of the Teacher

If curriculum is defined in its broadest sense, encompassing, as the NAEYC suggests, "prevailing theories, approaches, and models" (p.21), then the curriculum developer must select the theories, approaches, models, and subject matter upon which her own curriculum will be built. This suggests a high level of professionalism: understandings based on a body of theoretical knowledge and research; a strong commitment to the well-being of the students; and the right to make autonomous judgments free from external non-professional controls and constraints (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

North America and Great Britain have quite different histories regarding the role of the teacher in curriculum development. A tradition of teacher autonomy in Great Britain has translated into a long-standing belief in the teacher as curriculum maker. "It is a crucial element in the English educational idea. It is the key to the combination of pedagogic, political, and administrative initiatives which provide the drive for the curriculum reform in England and in Wales" (MacDonald and Walker, 1976, p. 32, cited in Jackson, 1992). During the period of curriculum reform in Britain during the 1960s, it was groups of teachers and teachers' associations that initiated many of these efforts.

Unlike Great Britain, North America has traditionally used much more hierarchical systems for curriculum development and reform. Influenced strongly by writers such as Bobbitt (1918) and Tyler (1949), North American school systems have most frequently looked at problems of curriculum from an organizational standpoint. Most often they have taken a technical view, turning to curriculum specialists to develop curriculum which teachers were then directed to implement. Part of this tradition, at least in Canada, evolved because of historical factors: a large immigrant population which, according to early policy-makers such as Egerton Ryerson, needed the "disciplined intelligence" which a structured curriculum was expected to provide; and rapid industrial development, leading to the idea that similar models could and should be used for education. Urban growth was viewed apprehensively, even though "progress" was promoted, and in the late 1800s bureaucracies of expert professional managers were created to efficiently administer police, public health, utilities, recreation, public welfare services, and finally education. The child became a focus of efforts to improve society and the school was seen as a vehicle for social reform: a means to prepare children to be productive and moral citizens. This legacy of the bureaucratically operated, practical or utilitarian education has continued to be influencial in curriculum policy-making across Canada

(Tompkins, 1986). Another major influence occurred in the mid-twentieth century, as an educational reform movement was accelerated by fear of not meeting Cold War competition, triggered particularly by the launching of the Soviet satellite, *Sputnik*. Scientists, mathematicians, and other subject experts were sought out as educational consultants. These educational consultants were cognitive-empiricists, influenced by behaviorists such as Jerome Bruner, and they replaced traditionalists in the curriculum field as policymakers and innovators (Giroux et al, 1981). Their technically oriented, goals-driven curriculum approaches continue to be a dominant influence today as teachers are expected to meet learning outcomes defined by experts in superior positions in an educational system which has largely maintained its hierarchical character.

In the meantime, in the past two decades, a counter-trend has occurred, in which teachers have been encouraged to take more and more responsibility regarding curriculum development. This counter-trend has been supported by curriculum theory which emphasizes the "practical" - the need to take into account practical constraints and concerns of the school community. This theoretical orientation sees practical judgment as an essential art in developing curriculum, and recognises the need for teachers to be central to curriculum development, making judgments based on their knowledge and experience and the demands of practical situations. It is a perspective for which both Schwab (1971) and Stenhouse (1975) have been spokesmen at a time of demands for school reform, and has resulted in movements toward school-based curriculum development, which have nevertheless coincided with political forces across North America and Great Britain which continue to insist on more centralised curriculum control.

The idea of classroom or school based curriculum development is supported by the view of teaching, not as a technical exercise, but as *praxis* where wise and experienced practitioners make highly complex judgments and act on the basis of these

judgments. This idea has been associated with Aristotle's distinction between "making" and "doing". The form of reasoning involved in "making" or *poietike* is means-end or instrumental reasoning, and can be likened to the rules involved in making a craft or acquiring a skill. Unlike *poietike,* the kind of reasoning necessary for the practical sciences such as education, is *praxis,* which, by reflection on its character and consequences, reflexively changes the "knowledge-base" which informs it. *Poietike* is therefore a "making" action, while "praxis" is a doing-action. *Techne* guides or directs action, but is not necessarily changed by it. *Praxis,* however, remakes the conditions of informed action and constantly reviews action and the knowledge which informs it. Furthermore, *praxis* is guided by a moral disposition to act truly and justly, an idea which the Greeks referred to as *phronesis.* Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest that "the Greek distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* help us to locate and characterise the underlying motives and attitudes that inform the two major modes of thought pervading contemporary understanding of education, curriculum and teaching (p. 34). One mode of thought sees education as essentially technical and asserts the need for centralised control; with this outlook, the teacher's role is to implement curriculum developed by people at higher levels in the education system. The other mode of thought is practical and moral, pointing to the need for curriculum to be something one "does" rather than something one "makes."

Carr & Kemmis (1986) explain how currently these two images rest uneasily alongside one another:

> On the one hand, professional teachers want to point to the complex aims for contemporary education apparently imposed by a society which requires sophisticated skills . . . and which has given schools complex tasks in social education in addition to their tasks of inculcating cognitive knowledge . . . moreover, teachers want to point to the complex technical knowledge about teaching methods now available, supported by theories of child development,

> learning, and social structure. These provide evidence of technical sophistication appropriate to a profession. But, on the other hand, teachers want to point to their autonomy and responsibility . . . guided by a disposition to act truly and rightly in the interests of their clients . . . (p. 38)

My recent experience as researcher/teacher gave me a deep (and sometimes painful) understanding of the difficulties in living simultaneously with these two points of view. The following section will describe two curriculum development models which appear to represent these points of view.

Two Models of Curriculum Development

This section will explore two current models of curriculum development: the "technical" and the "transformational".

The Technical

The technical model for curriculum development is most prevalent in educational systems in North America. This is not surprising, because our educational systems rest within a society which is a technological one. This view of curriculum development treats education as a means to given ends. Since it is recognised that there can be alternative means to given ends, research is looked at as a means of evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of different approaches. There is a belief that professional knowledge consists of knowing the means available and their effectiveness in different situations.

This view looks upon curriculum development as a craft. It is built on the belief in the continuity of our traditions about education, teachers, and schools. It appears that education can be improved by providing better resources or environments.

Problems are seen as "barriers" or "blocks" to the "educational delivery system" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 35).

Needs are identified, and goals and objectives for achievement are laid out. This is the approach currently held by the Alberta Department of Education. Teachers are viewed as curriculum developers in the sense that they are encouraged to develop the best means to ends which have been established at the Provincial level. Teachers are also provided with documents which suggest alternative strategies or approaches based on current theory and research. Textbooks are analysed by people in the curriculum branch, and approved if their aims match provincial goals and objectives and if they apply learning theory which is currently favoured by provincial policy-makers. It is assumed that teachers will study provincial goals and objectives and use their knowledge of theory and research to select strategies for attaining these goals, taking into consideration the particular needs of the students in their own classes. The teacher is a curriculum developer in the sense that she is not encouraged to follow the prescriptions of the approved textbooks; rather, she is expected to "develop" a curriculum which will suit the particular needs of her own school and classroom community.

The Transformational

The transformational curriculum is a model used as part of the position statement of the National Association for Education of Young Children (1992). It is based on the assumption that the child (rather than preconceived goals and objectives) should affect and change the curriculum. The transformational model puts the child at the center. It also places the child in what is called his/her sociocultural context, implying that curriculum decisions should be made in the context within which children learn. This context is influenced by many factors, especially the cultures of the families and the larger community; therefore, the curriculum should be developed

at the school or classroom level, where it is assumed information about the socio-cultural context in which the child lives is most easily attained.

The child (in his/her socio-cultural context) is seen as influencing four factors which inform curriculum decisions: conceptual organisers; curriculum content; child development theory and research; and theory regarding the continuum of learner. It is assumed that "curriculum development should take into account the many sources of curriculum: child development knowledge, individual characteristics of children, the knowledge base of various disciplines, the values of our culture, parents' desires, and the knowledge children need to function competently in our society" (p. 23). It is noted that the task of developing curriculum is made difficult by the fact that these diverse sources of curriculum may be in conflict with one another.

I include this model because it is similar to the approach taken by the authors of the Province of Alberta's educational policy documents (Alberta Education 1990a) which are made available to teachers alongside curriculum documents defining goals and objectives for different subject areas. It is also similar to the approach taken at the regional level, where curriculum developers are sometimes assigned to design curriculum which suits the needs of the community while still assuring that provincial goals and objectives will be met. At the classroom level, curriculum specialists are sometimes asked to help teachers interpret these curricula in light of the particular circumstances of the individual classroom. Teachers are also permitted and in some schools encouraged to be curriculum developers at the classroom level, using an approach like that represented by the transformational model. However, they are expected to show that provincial goals and objectives will be met and that selected strategies for meeting goals and objectives are supported by approved theoretical frameworks. My research experience helped me to understand the complexity and sometimes impossibility of this task, particularly when it must be undertaken by a teacher assigned to caring for and teaching a classroom full of children all day every day

of the week.

Frustration with putting this model into practice was also intensified because the model, particularly when used in conjunction with goals and objectives preconceived at the provincial level, does not sufficiently take into account the practical view of education which sees the open, undetermined character of school and classroom life. Under this view, educational processes cannot be viewed as means-ends systems. According to Carr & Kemmis (1986) the practical view of education accords with the experience of many teachers who do not feel a singlemindedness about the pursuit of objectives, feeling that they pursue many different aims and objectives more or less simultaneously,

> . . . for example, pursuing specific knowledge outcomes in a classroom activity, while at the same time pursuing general learning about wider views of knowledge, wider learnings about society, learnings about right conduct in the classroom and beyond, and even maintaining a readiness to change direction away from the specific topic under consideration to pursue an incidental topic which can engage the students and promote learnings which were unanticipated at the outset . . . equally, practitioners tend not to experience their expertise as a set of techniques or as a 'tool kit' for producing learning . . . expertise under this view does not consist of designing a set of sequenced means or techniques which 'drive' learners toward expected learning outcomes. It consists of spontaneous and flexible direction and redirection of the learning enterprise, guided by a sensitive reading of the subtle changes and responses of other participants in the enterprise . . . (p. 37)

Researchers into the culture of the classroom and into teacher's practical knowledge (e.g. Shulman, 1986; Elbaz, 1991; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Clandinen & Connelly, 1992) have done much to help us understand how teachers do

make decisions in their classrooms, and how curriculum is not necessarily determined at the outset, but evolves in response to the learning situation. This is why I sometimes found it so difficult to articulate a pre-conceived curriculum to those to whom I was accountable.

Taxonomies of Curriculum Orientations

Curriculum theorists have described differences in conceptions of curriculum, choosing to label various orientations. For example, McNeil (1977) categorised four conceptions of curriculum: humanistic, social reconstructionist, technological, and academic. Other writers have categorised curricular thought somewhat differently. Eisner and Vallance (1974) used five different categories: the cognitive processes approach, curriculum as technology, curriculum for self-actualization and consummatory experiences, curriculum for social reconstruction, and academic rationalism. In the most recent edition of their book about curriculum, Ornstein and Hunkins (1993) included a chapter in which they predicted an increasing tendency for people to orient themselves to one viewpoint or another. Suggesting that people will divide themselves into "camps", these authors actually used warring metaphors alluded to in Toffler's best selling books (e.g. Toffler, 1990). Quick to take advantage of such dramatisation, the popular press began to write about the "increasingly political and polarised debate in education" (Lewington, 1993).

Jackson (1992) points out that "all the views of curriculum are clearly interpretive and they are certainly political in the sense of being put forward with persuasive force and of having consequences that will serve the interests of some but not all" (p. 21). As I began my recent work as a teacher/researcher, I was finding that the idea of a battle between different viewpoints about curriculum was beginning to appear more and more in everyday conversation. Like Jackson, I questioned the

usefulness of such divisions. I agreed that "what is wrong or at least misleading is the suggestion that most people wind up adopting one or another of these general views on the curriculum . . . some people might do so, of course, but does everyone? *Need* everyone" (Jackson, 1992, p. 17)? I believed that, rather than isolating ourselves with our separate visions or joining ranks in theoretical battles, teachers, students and parents need more than ever to come to shared understandings of each other's perspectives, realities, hopes, dreams, fears, and experiences.

What I found, in practice, was that awareness of the different orientations to curriculum had already created divisions among the parents of my students. This polarisation not only made discussion difficult, it created the additional demand for me to continually defend not only provincial, regional, and school curriculum policies, but also the particular choices which I made in interpreting policy at the classroom level, to people who had already been influenced by persuasive arguments toward one or another of the curriculum orientations.

Another Viewpoint

Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest that a new language for describing education can recognize both technical and practical aspects of curriculum development: the systematic, institutional and instrumental (means-end) elements, and also the practical and moral character. They call this the "Strategic View" (p. 39). This section will first explain this view, noting its similarity to my own view at the outset of this study. I will then describe how my own preconceptions changed as a result of my teaching experience and my analysis of it.

What Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest is that there must be an acceptance, first of all, that educational activities are historically located, taking place against a socio-historical background and projecting a view of the kind of future we hope to

build. There must also be a consciousness that education is a social activity with social consequences (not just a matter of the development of the individual). Furthermore, there must be consciousness that education is intrinsically political, affecting the course of the lives of those involved in it.

According to Carr and Kemmis, a teacher should be willing to submit their work to systematic examination. She should plan thoughtfully, act deliberately, observe the consequences of action systematically, and reflect critically on the situational constraints and practical potential of the action being considered. At the same time, she should construct opportunities to carry this private deliberation into public discussion and debate - teachers, students, administrators, parents, and others in the school community. In doing this, she would help to establish a critical community of inquirers into teaching, the curriculum, and school organization, using *communication* as a means " to develop a sense of comparative experience, to discover local or immediate constraints on action by understanding the contexts within which others work, and by converting experience into discourse, using language as an aid to analysis and the development of a critical vocabulary which provides the terms for reconstructing practice" (p. 40).

This is a viewpoint similar to my own beliefs at the outset of my study. I will now describe how arising problems and difficulties severely inhibited my intentions and caused me to modify my own preconceptions about what a teacher as curriculum developer might accomplish.

Problems which Inhibited My Own Intentions

Some of the problems which inhibited my intentions have been mentioned in the preceding discussion of varying definitions of curriculum, the role of the teacher, models of curriculum development, and taxonomies of curriculum orientations. I will return to each of these now to show how they affected my study and the way my thinking

has changed.

Variations in the ways the curriculum is understood or defined create a tension between what is expected by laypeople who frequently make demands on policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners, and what is understood by policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners who have been educated and influenced by theorists. Parents, understanding curriculum to mean "what must be learned", were sometimes confused or even angered by the transformational model of curriculum development which was encouraged at my school. At the same time, I was not able to effectively promote the transformational model because it did not sufficiently take into account the realities of how I develop curriculum in practice. My efforts to support the transformational model were also made more difficult because this model was juxtaposed against the technical model of curriculum development required by the provincial government.

Different viewpoints regarding the role of the teacher in curriculum development also caused difficulties in communication. Depending on their own background, some parents believed that the teacher's "job" was to see that curriculum goals and objectives were achieved in accordance with directions laid out by her superiors. Other parents believed that, since the transformational model suggests that parents and community can and should influence curriculum development, they have a "right" to insist that the curriculum be designed by the classroom teacher to meet their particular expectations for their child. I was seen, by some, as having less autonomy than I actually had; and by others, as having much more. This discrepancy interfered with communication because it resulted in interchanges which were unexpected, and at times, offensive.

I have described, already, some of the discomfort in being expected to simultaneously apply more than one model of curriculum development, each based on conflicting or opposing philosophical viewpoints. To also be required to defend or

promote each of these models was difficult, and often frustrating. Because it became necessary to devote so much time to interpreting these curriculum models, first for myself, and then for others, I was distracted from my focus on the children in my care, and from the many day-to-day tasks involved in the teaching process. We communicate to others only partly through what we tell them; we also communicate through what we do, and what parents saw taking place in my classroom as a result of my distraction from the children was not what I would have wished to communicate to them.

It is largely for this reason that I have now changed my preconceptions about how classrooms should become forums for discussion where teachers, students and parents can come to shared understandings about hopes, dreams, concerns, and expectations. Faced with a new appreciation of the complexities involved in the process of communication, I now believe that promoting understandings of curriculum and curriculum development is beyond the scope of what a practising teacher can singlehandedly manage to do without jeopardising the quality of her classroom as a learning environment.

In my analysis of my recent teaching experience, I identified problems with time, learning resources, conflicting expectations, fear and loss of spirit as further difficulties which had a disabling effect on my own efforts to communicate with others and also on my efforts to teach. However, my intention, at this time, is not to discourage others from attempting to "fuse horizons" and to create the atmosphere of warmth and trust which allows conversations to flow in a relaxed and natural way in the hope of achieving better understandings. Rather, my intention is to illuminate the complexities in the inter-relationships among some of the problems and difficulties I encountered, and to bring forward for discussion how these complexities are related to the ways our educational systems are constructed and influenced by situations in our larger society. Only when we begin to see what we are doing against a broader background can we begin to find ways to better communicate with one another, to

achieve deeper understandings, and to work effectively together.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR INQUIRY

My experience as a teacher/researcher and the interpretive journey which I have described in this dissertation has heightened my awareness and understanding of the difficulties and problems which can be encountered by classroom teachers, not only as they try to communicate with their students and their students' parents, but as they try to undertake their teaching duties. It has also heightened my awareness of how difficult it may be for a teacher to communicate these problems or difficulties to the many others who have an influence on what is happening in classrooms and in schools.

In the chapters which focused on the different threads in my metaphorical weaving, many difficulties were uncovered and questions were raised. In looking at time, the complexities of problems with time were illuminated. Time was shown to be a difficult problem, intertwined with current conceptions of change and with the expectations of the many different people to whom a teacher is accountable. Such problems can not be easily solved by time management courses or by the provision of "extra time." Recognising the complexity of such problems leads to questions about what might be needed for teachers to create comfortable, unhurried environments where relationships may be developed and where children may learn.

Obligations or expectations regarding teacher preparation of materials were shown to be connected to other difficulties in the classroom and to difficulties with communication with parents. The difficulties in simultaneously teaching several subjects and in explaining curriculum to parents without the aid of professionally developed materials were elucidated. These insights led to questions about how high quality, professionally developed materials might be offered to teachers to facilitate teaching, learning, and communication without compromising current understandings of how children construct knowledge and learn relationally.

Difficulties in coping with a variety of expectations were described in relation

with many other problems. This raised important questions about the sources of accountability, and whether it is feasible or reasonable to be simultaneously accountable to so many different people (administrators, policy-makers, a wide variety of parents with diverse opinions). This, in turn, raised questions about who is responsible for the education of children, and what, indeed, education is about.

The relationship of fear or distrust to other difficulties also raised questions. How can trust in our educational institutions be built so that teachers can devote more time to teaching their students and less time to justifying their decisions or actions?

The inter-relationships among these difficulties led to questions about teachers' guilt, and how stories about real-life situations are sometimes hidden because it is so easy to assume that difficulties are the teacher's fault. What can be done when the impact of too many difficulties or problems disables teachers and darkens learning environments?

Probably the most surprising insight which resulted from my interpretive journey was that it is not necessarily the impact of the greatest difficulty, theme, or thread which can most affect a teacher's life and decision-making and his/her ability to communicate with students, parents and others outside the classroom. Rather, the greatest impact can be the result of an accumulation and inter-relationships among many threads, problems or difficulties. This underlines the need for administrators and policy-makers to understand that educational models must take into consideration the complex and volatile contexts in which they are imposed. It also shows how difficult it may be for a teacher to "describe" or "justify" his/her curriculum decision-making to others outside the classroom, or to be accountable to ensure that certain expectations have been met. As a teacher/researcher, it was extremely illuminating to actually experience the frustration of being faced with impossible demands that could not be simply explained because of the complexity of the situation. Having actually experienced these feelings was vastly different from watching someone

else experience them or hearing someone else describe them. This points to the idea that real-life situations can be so complex that people can not understand the impact of such situations unless they have experienced them themselves. Hearing other people's stories might be helpful in understanding, but second-hand knowledge can not have the power of personal experience. This points to the importance of having more research done in the classroom by teacher/researchers who are first, in a position to collect their data within the complex and dynamic conditions of a classroom, and second, freed from the responsibilities of the classroom, to analyse their findings and to communicate their insights to other people in the educational community.

The chapter on teachers as researchers described how educational discourse may be informed by the work of teacher/researchers. It also pointed to some problems which can inhibit communication among teacher/researchers and others in the educational community. Some of these problems include differing conceptions of research, differing theoretical frameworks, questions of ownership and content, problems regarding documentation and analysis, fearfulness and questions of fidelity. Perhaps new starting places need to be considered by administrators, policy-makers, parents and university researchers who sincerely want to understand and influence educational practice. These starting places could take into consideration some of the themes or threads identified in this research.

The discussion about teacher as curriculum developer also pointed to difficulties which are both the cause and the result of problems in communication and understanding. These difficulties include varying definitions of curriculum, different understandings of the role of the teacher in curriculum development, and a tendency to polarisation of views about curriculum orientations and development. All these problems can stifle communication and understandings among teachers, parents, administrators, policy-makers and university educators.

My experience as a teacher/researcher made me keenly (and sometimes

painfully) aware of both the importance and the difficulty of involving teachers and teacher/researchers in serious discussion of these problems. The pain and discomfort deepened my own understandings and furthered my concerns. Although researchers should not purposely be placed in potentially painful situations, I do believe that human beings must sometimes experience some discomfort in order to better understand other situations and other lives. For this reason, I believe that more researchers should take risks, as I did, and immerse themselves in real-life situations and journeys where they have an opportunity to live, taste, and feel the difficulties of everyday life. While the health of researchers should not be jeopardised, we need to remember that the uncomfortable conditions which they may experience are the same conditions which some teachers face on a daily basis.

There has been the suggestion that the difficulties in a real-life situation may be intensified because of the newness of the situation for the researcher. However, teachers also enter new situations constantly - with transfers to new schools, assignments to new subject areas, new curriculum expectations, new students, and new administrative policies. Change has become a constant part of life in the classroom.

There has also been some discussion of the difficulty of teaching while simultaneously looking at a situation through the eyes of a researcher, and the suggestion that the effort to undertake these two missions at once may accentuate the problems. Although it may be true that such an undertaking is problematic, we need to remember that good teachers are looking at their own practice critically at all times. Good teachers are constantly analysing and considering alternatives. If such undertakings are too difficult for a researcher, they are also too difficult for a classroom teacher to undertake while simultaneously taking responsibility for the lives of a roomful of young children. If teachers are to be encouraged to "improve" their teaching by taking an analytical stance or by looking critically at their practice,

perhaps they need to be freed of some other demands so that an overwhelming or impossible situation is not created.

This dissertation described the inter-relationships among various difficulties which provided challenges to communication and understanding as I undertook my study, and it has illuminated the links between the difficulties in my particular situation and conditions in the larger community outside my classroom. My hope was that, in identifying these links, conversations will be opened so that such questions as these can be discussed: How can trust within our educational institutions be developed? How can consensus be reached regarding expectations while still allowing for diversity of thought? How can teachers be protected from a myriad of diverse demands and overwhelming difficulties so that they can create happy, comfortable, unhurried learning environments for their students? How can education serve to enrich rather than deprive the souls of its students and its teachers?

Unfortunately, it has sometimes been difficult, as a teacher/researcher, to focus my readers' attention on problems I have uncovered and the questions I have raised. Instead, there has been a tendency for readers to want to hear more about my particular story. But this dissertation is not about me or about my story; it is about what is *in* the experience which I lived and interpreted, and about the meaning that can be made *between* writer and reader and *among* the members of the educational community. Although a reader may be curious to hear the "whole story", It is important to remember that some stories can not be told in all their rich detail. When a teacher/researcher has become part of a community, writing details and telling stories of particular events can violate friendships and loyalties to co-workers and destroy the trust which is so essential for communication. In such cases, readers must not expect to "hear the whole story." The bones are the most that can be offered. However, I believe that if the bones are accepted in a spirit of trust, the bones drawn from the real-life experience of a teacher/researcher can be as powerful a tool for

educational discourse as an anonymous second-hand story offered in its entirety.

Other researchers (teacher/researchers and also university based researchers) could do as I have done. They could immerse themselves in the field and create a narrative account of their experiences. They could then proceed with the forward arc of the hermeneuetic circle, making reflections on their daily entries. Finally, after they are freed from the responsibilities of their field experience (of course, this should be pre-arranged), they can do their analysis, identifying threads or themes and studying these in relation to each other and to conditions outside their particular situation. This is the backward arc of the hermeneutic circle, and it can be an exciting and illuminating process. Received in a spirit of interest and trust, such work can illuminate new ideas, raise new questions, and provide openings for fruitful discussion. Such work can also enhance communication and deepen understandings among those who care about children, so that educational practice may be improved. Perhaps this dissertation will help to identify and diffuse some of the difficulties which such researchers may encounter, so that this model for research may become a useful and exciting tool for many people.

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